Eberhard Jüngel

GOD'S BEING IS IN BECOMING

The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth

Translated and with an Introduction by John Webster

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The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth. A Paraphrase

EBERHARD JÜNGEL

Translated by
JOHN WEBSTER

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

What follows is a complete revision of the earlier translation by Horton Harris of Jüngel's *Gottes Sein ist im Werden*, published twenty-five years ago as *The Doctrine of the Trinity. God's Being Is in Becoming*.[1] Harris' pioneering translation was undertaken at a point at which Jüngel was almost entirely unknown in English-speaking theological circles, and did much to bring him to the attention of those outside Germany, paving the way for translators in the 1980s who made much more of his work available. In recasting the translation, I have aimed at something at once more faithful and more idiomatic; I have also taken the opportunity to translate Latin and Greek phrases, to align the many quotations from Barth with the standard English translation, and to include a translation of the Epilogue to the third German edition. The veteran Hegel translator Malcolm Knox once warned translators that they live in glass houses, and my rendering of the book will not be above reproach. But I hope it will give an opportunity for renewed study of a text which is not only central to appreciating the thought of one of Europe's leading Christian thinkers, but also of enduring significance for constructive trinitarian theology.

I have received much help from my students Greg Robertson (who produced a draft translation of the epilogue), Jeffery Schroeder (who checked the references to Barth) and Jennifer Cooper (who checked the proofs).

JOHN WEBSTER
Oxford

[1] Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976.

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

I

This early monograph by Jüngel has very often been read as a straightforward – if at times rather dense – dogmatic essay on Barth's theology of the triune God, especially by readers of the first English translation which, unlike the German original, entitled the work *The Doctrine of the Trinity*. What Jüngel is attempting here, however, is rather more complex. Although much of the study is taken up with what the sub-title calls a 'paraphrase' of Barth's trinitarian theology, the treatment that it offers of that theme is by no means complete: Jüngel has, for example, comparatively little to say about the identities of Father, Son and Spirit as Barth expounds them in paragraphs 10–12 of *Church Dogmatics*, and even less detail about the trinitarian dramatics of the doctrine of reconciliation in *Church Dogmatics* IV. For all the remarkable astuteness of Jüngel's reading (which his later interpretations of Barth will confirm),[1] this is not simply a piece of Barth exegesis. Nor is it simply a book on the doctrine of the Trinity; although Jüngel has much to say of Barth's account of the inseparability of Trinity and revelation, and of such trinitarian topics as perichoresis, appropriation, relation, and so forth, the book also has other major preoccupations, such as the nature of divine objectivity, and the presence and activity of God in the world. The treatment of these topics is, of course,

[1] Many of these were collected as *Barth-Studien* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1982), a selection of which was translated as *Karl Barth. A Theological Legacy* (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1986).

thoroughly informed by trinitarian considerations; but the book does not restrict itself to trinitarian theology proper.

In one sense, indeed, the book is not even a piece of dogmatics *tout court*. It is Jüngel's first sustained essay in what might be termed philosophical theology, or – perhaps better – philosophical dogmatics. That is, it is an acute attempt to identify and reflect upon philosophical, and especially ontological, problems which are raised in the course of considering Christian doctrine. It is not 'philosophy of religion', in that it is not concerned with general philosophical aspects of religion, but with the Christian faith in its dogmatic particularity; and it is certainly not philosophy as apologetics or foundations. Like other pieces of Jüngel's best work – notably the major study from the 1970s, *God as the Mystery of the World*, but also ground-breaking essays on metaphor or on the ontological aspects of justification or eschatology[2] – it reflects on the metaphysical entailments of the Christian gospel and its articulation in dogma. Jüngel undertakes this task on the basis of a conviction that theological misunderstanding often derives from metaphysical presuppositions unexamined and uncriticised by substantive Christian truth, a conviction given lengthy exposition in *God as the Mystery of the World*. This later book, which offers an account of the history of thought and speech about God in modernity, in which the decline of trinitarian dogma is identified as a root cause of the incoherence of Christian theology before its philosophical interrogators, is in many respects the full articulation of themes already broached here in *God's Being Is in Becoming*. And in important respects both books, in their interweaving of dogmatics and philosophy, are not simply after the manner of Barth but also after the manner of Hegel.

The genre of this essay is also one in which Jüngel has often operated: close commentary on a text of great depth and range, through which central theological and philosophical problems can be explored. The combination of very detailed interpretation

[2] E. Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983); 'Metaphorical Truth', in *Theological Essays* I (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), pp. 16–71; 'The World as Possibility and Actuality', in ibid., pp. 95–123; 'The Emergence of the New', in *Theological Essays* II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), pp. 35–58.

of Barth and rather severely abstract conceptual discussion makes for demanding reading. The difficulties can be eased somewhat, however, if the originating context of the book is borne in mind, and if the shape of the argument in its entirety is made clear before moving through it.

The immediate context of Jüngel's essay, addressed briefly in Introduction I and rather more fully in Part III(d), is a dispute between the New Testament scholar Herbert Braun and the Barthian dogmatician Helmut Gollwitzer. Gollwitzer read Braun's insistence on the non-objectifiable character of God as proof of the subjective swerve within the school of demythologising, and countered the danger by insisting strongly on the necessity of language of God in and for himself as prior to any talk of God for us. Jüngel – rightly – sees the quarrel as a late phase in the dispute between Barth and Bultmann about the nature of divine objectivity. Indeed, we might go further and say that the dispute uncovers one of the deepest divides in modern Christian theology in the West: the divide between those who responded to philosophical idealism by restricting the metaphysical range of Christian theology, arguing that a theology oriented to Christian existence does not entail an objectivist ontology of the divine, and those who tried to fashion some kind of (critical or post-critical) realism in talking about God *in se*.[3] The dispute lies behind the differences between the hermeneutical orientation of Bultmann's theology, for which the primary question is 'What does it mean to speak of God?' (p. 1), and the dogmatic orientation of Barth's theology, which is concerned to spell out the sense in which we *must* speak of God (ibid.).

Schooled both in the existential-hermeneutical theology of Bultmann, Fuchs and Ebeling and in the dogmatics of Barth, Jüngel clearly feels some responsibility to mediate in the dispute, trying to show that, however correct Gollwitzer's doctrinal instincts may be, he insists so strongly on an abstract notion of divine aseity

[3] The continuing significance of this dispute for trinitarian theology can be seen in, for example, C. LaCugna's study of that doctrine in *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992).

that his proposal becomes, in effect, a mirror image of the subjectivism which he rejects. Insisting on the priority of God in and for himself, Gollwitzer can make little sense of the radical historicity of God in identification with Jesus Christ, and so threatens to undermine any real relation between God's being *pro se* and his being *pro nobis*. Jüngel is particularly concerned by the distinction which Gollwitzer draws between the will and the essence of God, according to which God's historicity is a function of God's will rather than of God's essential being. Jüngel's fear is that this distinction reintroduces an abstract deity anterior to God's action in the economy of salvation, and so undermines the all-important fact that the one whom we encounter in salvation is God as God truly is.[4]

In effect, then, Jüngel is recasting the debate between Braun and Gollwitzer in terms of the relation between the economic and immanent being of the triune God. If, as Barth – and much of the rest of modern trinitarian theology – insists, God's immanent being is inseparable from his economic being, then theology is not required to choose between an objective and a subjective orientation, or between dogmatics and hermeneutics. God *is* the event of his radical historical presence in Jesus Christ. The antitheses in which the Braun–Gollwtizer dispute is entangled – between God's self-relation and God's relation to the world, between aseity and relationality, between ontology and subjectivity – are merely apparent, and can be resolved by emphasising the trinitarian correspondence between God's being *ad intra* and

[4] Ted Peters is thus correct in suggesting that '[t]he significance of the doctrine of the Trinity for Eberhard Jüngel's work is that he believes that it resolves the dilemma between the aseity and the relationality of God': *God as Trinity. Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminister John Knox Press, 1993), p. 90; cf. pp. 90–7. Peters' critique of Jüngel for preserving 'an *a se* divinity with internal relations that are independent of God's relations to the world' (ibid., p. 143) is wide of the mark, making Jüngel look very much like Gollwitzer, and simply voices Peters' process-theological aversion to any notion of divine aseity. For a highly perceptive account of the way in which trinitarian doctrine enables theology to move beyond the antinomies of, for example, past and present or being and meaning, see C. Schwöbel, 'Christology and Trinitarian Thought', in idem (ed.), *Trinitarian Theology Today* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), pp. 113–46, esp. pp. 115–19.

God's being *ad extra*. To spell this out, however, requires a dogmatics of the triune God, and a theological ontology of divine 'becoming' which is controlled at every point by that dogmatics. This Jüngel's essay seeks to supply.

II

The study opens with a treatment of 'God's being revealed'. The word-play of the title is important, indicating as it does both that God's being is known only in revelation, and also that, since what is revealed is God's being, the self-communicative movement in which God makes himself present to us and for us is not alien to his being. Indeed, for Jüngel it is axiomatic that the function of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is to state precisely this point: God is identical with himself in his self-communication, in the movement of sending the Son into the world in the unity of the Spirit, thereby setting himself in relation to us. If this is so, then the antitheses of 'being' and 'history', 'aseity' and 'relation', are already overcome. To secure this point, Jüngel traces four themes, which are best read not as sequential stages of an argument but as parallel lines of inquiry.

First, in part I(a), he considers how the self-communicative triune God can be a matter of human language, a problem raised in the tradition of trinitarian theology by the question of the so-called *vestigia trinitatis*. Jüngel interprets Barth's unease about the *vestigia* as a refusal to concede that human language is *per se* capable of speaking of God. On Barth's account, language needs to be 'commandeered' by revelation, so that God can (in Jüngel's characteristic phrase, derived from Fuchs) 'come to speech', that is, be present in a communicative act of human language. Here Jüngel draws out Barth's rejection of language as an 'illustration' of revelation; this would suggest that, independent of revelation, language had some access to that which revelation articulates, of which it could therefore of itself furnish fitting symbols which would take their place alongside revelation. Barth prefers to speak of language as an 'interpretation' of revelation, for in this way the autonomy and irreducibility of revelation (what Jüngel terms

its 'sameness') are safeguarded. The whole discussion is undergirded by Jüngel's perception of the crucial place of divine agency in Barth's account of revelation: revelation is not the result of a co-ordination of a mute God and human speech-acts, for the triune God is himself – literally – a speaker.[5]

Second, therefore, in part I(b) revelation is best understood as God's self-interpretation. This is how Jüngel understands Barth's affirmation of the inseparability of revelation and Trinity, in which revelation is the three-fold event of revealer, revelation and being revealed. Barth's point – frequently misunderstood – is that the whole scope of the event of divine communication, from its inception through its enactment to its effective presence in the human realm, is a free divine activity. But, because revelation is God's *self*-communication, the God who is at work in the differentiated event of self-manifestation is in himself differentiated.

Moreover, God reveals himself as *Lord*: in acting to manifest himself, God manifests himself as one who is capable of such self-manifestation. Put differently: the doctrine of the Trinity concerns God's inalienable and prevenient subjectivity. In stressing this, however, Jüngel is not falling into the hands of the abstract notion of divine aseity to which he fears Gollwitzer's account succumbs. This is why he argues (not without some surprise) that the doctrine of the Trinity in Barth performs the same function as the programme of demythologising serves in the theology of Bultmann. For the latter, demythologising prevents objectification through myth; for the former, the doctrine of the Trinity prevents any severing of God's external acts and his inner being. The crucial principle is, in short: 'God corresponds to himself'.

[5] Failure to grasp this (pretty elementary) point about Barth's doctrine of revelation and its place in his theology of grace lies behind David Cunningham's remarks on what Jüngel has to say about the 'capturing' of language by revelation: 'I have never read anyone who has made a bit of sense out of this passage, in which revelation seems to be personified and given a will of its own that allows it somehow to operate without the help of language, and to "capture" language in ways which evade the wills of the human beings who use this language' (*These Three Are One. The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1998], p. 105 n. 41). But – as Jüngel insists – for Barth, revelation is not 'personified'; revelation *is Dei loquentis persona.*

Third, in part I(c), this basic principle of God's self-correspondence means that the being of God is relationally structured: God's aseity is a set of ordered relations between Father, Son and Spirit. Part I(d) spells this out in greater detail, identifying two movements in Barth's doctrine of the Trinity, one making use of the doctrine of perichoresis, and one making use of the doctrine of appropriation. Perichoresis stresses the unity of God as an event of the mutual interpenetration of the divine modes of being – though this unity is not to be thought of as some 'essence' behind the work of God, as if the perichoretic oneness of God were anterior to the differentiated reality of God encountered in his work in the world. Appropriation safeguards differentiation, and therefore enables theologically coherent talk of the being of God as Father, Son and Spirit.

In effect, then, what Jüngel attempts in part I of *God's Being Is in Becoming* is an anatomy of Barth's account of the triune God as self-communicative, the one who is incontestably Lord in the differentiated action of revelation, and therefore equiprimordially for himself and for us. Following from this, part II moves to inquire more closely into the nature of divine objectivity – once again a key point at issue between the traditions of Barth and Bultmann. For many of Bultmann's followers, objectivity always threatened to become objectification, mythological reification of the encounter and decision of faith. For Barthians, objectivity provided the only real bulwark against the way in which encounters and decisions may be existentialised and expounded as modulations of the religious believer's experience. Jüngel's claim is that Barth's own thinking cannot be satisfactorily aligned with either alternative: each runs the risk of assuming general epistemological principles, and of failing to invoke theological (and trinitarian) doctrine in articulating an appropriate understanding of divine objectivity, in which that objectivity is not a human cognitive product but rather the active self-bestowing presence of God. Once again, Jüngel proceeds by attempting to retrieve the dogmatic structure of the argument in the *Church Dogmatics*.

A crucial tract of the argument concerns the sacramental character of God's objective presence to humanity. God's

objectivity is mediated through creaturely forms, which do not of themselves have a capacity to make God present, but are annexed by God for the purposes of divine self-manifestation, as 'secondary' objectifications of God's primary objectivity. The grounds of this modest account of creaturely mediation (which Jüngel rightly finds in the earlier epistemological material in the *Church Dogmatics*, but about which Barth becomes perceptibly skittish by the time he reaches the doctrine of reconciliation) are christological. The union of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ constitutes a promise that (by grace) other creaturely realities may be taken up into God's self-manifestation. If this already chases away the spectre of 'pure' divine objectivity of the kind for which Gollwitzer seems to be contending, it also prepares the way for a larger claim, namely, that for Barth, God's being has anthropological significance in that it brings our existence into a definite relation to itself. Here again, the attempt to show the companionability of Barth and Bultmann in the midst of their divergences is never far from the surface. On Jüngel's account, the contrast between the two is not a simple antithesis of theological abstraction (Barth) and the dissolution of theology into anthropology (Bultmann). It is more that, for Barth, there is an analogical relation of theology and anthropology, whereas for Bultmann a relation of paradoxical identity obtains between them. Whether Jüngel is correct that both Barth and Bultmann escape the antinomy of objective and subjective is certainly an open question: at the very least, his account seems to require at a number of points a rather strained reading of both thinkers. But it is nevertheless true that Jüngel's interpretation of Barth shows with some success that once the problem is framed in a trinitarian way, then at least some of the more extreme competing alternatives may be transcended.

Part III of the study picks up these themes by drawing attention to the notion of God's being to which Barth appeals. For Barth, God is God's act: God's being is not, as it were, reconstructed by going back behind the economic action of God, for God's being is the self-moved, free act of God's self-communicative presence

in history. More specifically, the act in which God is, is the act of God setting himself in relation to us, an act which 'reiterates' God's innertrinitarian being. Jüngel demonstrates that for Barth this is closely related to the way in which the doctrine of election is drawn back into the being of God. Placing election there (rather than in the context of discussion of the human scope of God's saving work) means that election is God's self-election, God's decision to be God in this way, in and as the man Jesus. The consequence is that God *is* the one who determines himself to be in relation to us through Christ. Once again, therefore, 'God corresponds to himself' in his act of relating to us in Christ: God's historicity is not something which has, so to speak, to be secured by rejecting objective language about God, nor something which has to be resisted as subversive of God's majestic freedom. Rather, God's historicity, grounded in his eternal triune life of relation, *is* his majestic freedom, his self-determination to be God in this way.

Jüngel lays considerable emphasis on the fact that God's determination to be God in the movement of Jesus' historical existence entails God's passion.[6] Though Jüngel is often too swiftly aligned with other modern theopaschite theologians, what makes his work distinctive is something learned from Barth, namely, an insistence that God's passion as the incarnate and crucified one is not an alien fate, somehow the occasion of God's renunciation of divinity, but the chosen mode of God's action. Suffering and death are modes of God's sovereign capacity: God *can* die. Thus, part of the force of the term 'becoming' is to provide a theological account of the being of God in which the trinitarian God can *be* in self-surrender.

None of this works, of course, within the terms of the doctrine of God which Gollwitzer espouses, because talk of God's passion, like talk of God's historicity, will undermine the independence of God if that independence is understood in a non-relational

[6] It is possible that Jüngel overstates the nature and extent of Barth's commitment to the notion of divine suffering; see P. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 118f.

way.[7] What Jüngel finds in Barth's trinitarian theology, as well as in his accounts of election and Christology, is a concept of divine independence which is not arrived at on the basis of a non-theological ontology of first substances, but is, rather, governed by the actuality of God's subsistence – that is, by God's self-revelatory historical presence and act in Jesus Christ. The crucial principle for an ontology of the divine is that God's being in and for himself be conceived on the basis of God's revelatory action, which means on the basis of God's triune relatedness. God *is* the event of his self-gift as Father, Son and Spirit.

III

What is the enduring significance of Jüngel's study? First, like nearly everything which he has written on Barth, it is interpretation of the highest order. Jüngel has a keen eye for the details of Barth's thought, as well as a clear appreciation of its overall shape and coherence, and an insistence on its thoroughly *theological* character, which means that he can make constructive use of Barth without simply plundering the Barth corpus for material to press into service in other causes. Moreover, his interpretation offers an important counterbalance to the more critical readings of Barth's trinitarian theology which have largely dominated reception of this aspect of his work in English-language theology.[8] Those critiques have sometimes forced Barth onto the Procrustean bed of a certain monistic reading of Augustine and the Western trinitarian tradition, and

[7] The critique of Jüngel offered by David Coffey presupposes much the same doctrine of God's relation to the world that Jüngel criticises in Gollwitzer. Coffey, for example, suggests that Jüngel 'appears to situate the historicality of God in the inner depths of his nature rather than in his relationality' (D. Coffey, *Deus Trinitas* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], p. 132), and seeks to counter Jüngel by pressing the necessity of a distinction between God as absolute person and the three relative divine persons.

[8] The most full and appreciatively critical presentation of this interpretation of Barth in English is that by A. Torrance, *Persons in Communion* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

so have been less than alert to Barth's frequently expressed commitment to the differentiation of the divine persons; because he does not view Barth through the lens of social trinitarianism, Jüngel is able to see much more clearly the sheer complexity and variety of what Barth is doing, and to resist the reduction of Barth to a few slogans about uncorrected monotheism and the like.

Second, and more important, the study constitutes a reminder of the need for an adequate trinitarian ontology. Jüngel (along with Moltmann, though far exceeding Moltmann in philosophical sophistication) is an early example of what thirty-five years on has become an established tendency to deploy the doctrine of the Trinity in order to differentiate between Christian belief in God and philosophical theism. But he does not share the impatience with ontological issues of some of the more lush recent theologies of the Trinity. Quite the opposite: theological ontology is an essential prerequisite for progress in dogmatics. The ontology is, of course, self-consciously and explicitly *theological*: Jüngel is insistent that 'becoming' is a function of God, not vice-versa: 'God's being is not identified with God's becoming; rather, God's being is ontologically located' (p. xxv). What Jüngel finds in Barth's *Dogmatics* is precisely what a hostile reader like Milbank believes Barth singularly failed to provide, namely an attempt 'to define being . . . theologically'.[9] And it is a sense of the importance of theological ontology which lies behind the frustration with critics of the book expressed in the epilogue, added to the third German edition in 1975. Jüngel's study had been widely criticised as 'Hegelian' – by conservative Barthians who mistrusted any ontological language, as well as by praxis-oriented interpreters of Barth who considered that Jüngel was simply promoting a kind of high scholasticism, unrelated to the 'engaged' character of

[9] J. Milbank, 'Knowledge. The theological critique of philosophy in Hamann and Jacobi', in J. Milbank et al. (eds), *Radical Orthodoxy. A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 22. Milbank adduces no evidence for this claim, which rests on the (unargued) thesis that Barth betrays 'a broad acceptance of a post-Kantian understanding of philosophy' (ibid., p. 21).

Barth's work.[10] Jüngel's reply is simply to point out that, however much theological conviction may entail the revision of metaphysical principles, giving intellectual attention to the gospel does not mean that one ceases to be a philosopher or that one must renounce the search for ontological categories appropriate to the gospel.

Insistence on the importance of ontology for theology is often bound up with a certain understanding of theological realism. In British theology, the paradigmatic modern examples are Donald MacKinnon or T. F. Torrance,[11] for both of whom attention to ontology provides a means of resisting subjective reduction of theology to affective or moral discourse. Jüngel shares some of these instincts (which in the case of MacKinnon and Torrance are also shaped by serious attention to Barth's corpus), and he is keen to maintain the priority of the self-bestowing object of theological inquiry.[12] However, he is a good deal more radically 'historical' than many schooled by Barth, in that – as a pupil of Bultmann – he is also deeply interested in the *existential* reality of God. For Jüngel, the object of theology, and therefore the object of a theological ontology, is the *event* of God's coming to the world, the divine procession. Because God *is* in this movement of procession, there arises an encounter between God and humanity, an encounter whose depiction inevitably raises

[10] The charge of Hegelianism continues to be made: G. O'Collins fears the incursion of an 'idealist legacy' and 'the risk of lapsing into Hegelian speculations about the inner history of God': *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (London: Chapman, 1999), p. 158.

[11] See D. M. MacKinnon, *Explorations in Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1976), pp. 70–89, 138–65; idem, *Themes in Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), pp. 145–88; idem, '"Substance" in Christology – A Cross-Bench View', in S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton (eds), *Christ, Faith and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 279–300; idem, 'Aristotle's Conception of Substance', in R. Bambrough (ed.), *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 97–119. See also T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).

[12] In Jüngel's case, the influence of a certain reading of Heidegger's critique of post-Cartesian idealism is also felt: for an explicit treatment, see his essay with M. Trowitzsch, 'Provozierendes Denken. Bemerkungen zur theologischen Anstößigkeit der Denkwege Martin Heideggers', *Neue Hefte für Philosophie* 23 (1984), pp. 59–74.

hermeneutical questions – questions, that is, about God as a qualification of human subjectivity. What distinguishes Jüngel, therefore, from Barth's more decidedly 'objective' interpreters is his co-ordination of the traditions of Barth and Christian existentialism, by offering in the notion of the divine procession a dogmatic justification of concern with the hermeneutical problem. Concern with that problem is not grounded in some axiomatic human subjectivity (though many correlationist readers of Bultmann read him in this way, as, in effect, closely akin to Tillich), but in a dogmatic principle, namely, the historical event of God's self-manifestation.

This aspect of Jüngel's work – both in his interpretation of Barth and in his own constructive writing – has not received the thorough critical discussion it deserves. Barth himself was notoriously reluctant to make concessions to Christian existentialism, which he feared was simply a revisiting of the theologies of Ritschl and Schleiermacher. Nor did Barth himself make use in his theology of incarnation and atonement to ground any kind of existential interests. This is largely because the work which in Jüngel's theology is undertaken by hermeneutics tends in Barth's theology to be undertaken by doctrines – most of all, by concrete language about the resurrection of Christ and his exercise of his prophetic office. On these themes in Barth, Jüngel has less to say, and one of the most important questions to ask of this brief study concerns whether its handling of the relation of Barth and Bultmann can be supported, not simply by Barth's earlier doctrine of the Trinity but also by the theology of Christian existence in *Church Dogmatics* IV.

Jüngel also has rather little to say about the person and action of the Holy Spirit.[13] It is possible to argue (not, in my judgment, successfully) that this simply reflects a *lacuna* in Barth's own trinitarian theology. More probably, however, it has more to do with a number of other features of Jüngel's own work, most of which emerged in the years following the

[13] See R. Williams, 'Word and Spirit', in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 107.

publication of *God's Being Is in Becoming*. One such feature is the rather narrow focus of Jüngel's Christology, whose key moments are Jesus' speech-acts and his death, as a result of which the presence and agency of the risen one in the power of the Spirit are often not fully operative.[14] Another is the very sharp distinction between God's interceptive word of revelation and human historical processes which Jüngel often maintains in his ethics, ecclesiology and sacramental theology.[15] Contemporary social trinitarians will be tempted to read this as a repetition of the fate of Western theism, which, having failed to take seriously the category of relation for the doctrine of the Trinity, risks closing off the divine life from human participation, and leaving human history as a realm of mere secularity. This would be a hasty judgment, and would not do justice to the nuance of Jüngel, still less of Barth. But it may at least indicate some areas where Jüngel's proposal might be extended and refined.

Yet Jüngel's achievement remains. Of all those schooled by Barth, he is the one who has sought to honour the teacher not by repetition but by thinking through Barth's work and allowing himself to be goaded by it into responsible theological discourse – 'responsible' in the sense of responsive to the self-bestowing becoming in which God is. One of Barth's other great pupils put it thus:

> The fact that in the incarnation God became man without ceasing to be God, tells us that his nature is characterised by both repose and movement, and that his eternal Being is also a divine *Becoming*. This does not mean that God ever becomes other than he eternally is or that he passes over from becoming into being something else, but rather that he continues unceasingly to be what he always is and ever will be in the living movement of his eternal Being. His Becoming is not a becoming on the way toward being or toward a fullness of being, but is the eternal

[14] See here my article 'Jesus in the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel', *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 (1997), pp. 43–71.

[15] A careful treatment of these themes can be found in R. Spjuth, *Creation, Contingency and Divine Presence* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1995). See also my essay 'Justification, Analogy and Action. Passivity and Activity in Jüngel's Anthropology', in J. Webster (ed.), *The Possibilities of Theology. Essays on the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel in his Sixtieth Year* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), pp. 106–42.

fullness and the overflowing of his eternal unlimited Being. Becoming expresses the dynamic nature of his Being. His Becoming is, as it were, the other side of his Being, and his Being is the other side of his Becoming. His Becoming is his Being in movement and his Being in movement is his Becoming.[16]

[16] T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 242.

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FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

The title of this book may be off-putting. However, I ask you to read it carefully. It is not a matter of the 'God who becomes'. God's being is not identified with God's becoming; rather, God's being is ontologically located.

The rather unusual title may at least claim to have the advantage that it does not try to grasp God's being from what is familiar. At the same time it draws attention to the fact that much that is familiar should be grasped in a new way – above all, what is meant by 'becoming'. Naturally – or better: in the understanding of faith – the becoming in which God's being is cannot mean either an augmentation or a diminution of God's being. Evaluative categories like augmentation and diminution are in any case best to be kept away from the concept of being, if we are not once again to be required to think of God as the *summum ens* and thus as supreme value. But the God whose being is in becoming can *die* as a human being! 'Becoming' thus indicates the manner *in* which God's being exists, and in this respect can be understood as the ontological place of the being of God.

To prevent any misunderstanding, let me say at once: the ontological place of God's being is the place which God chooses. However, when God is understood as the one who chooses, his being is already thought of as a being in becoming. This hermeneutical circle is grounded in an ontological circle which will be located by the designation 'God's being is in becoming'. The ontological location of God's being in becoming is an attempt to *think* theologically in what way God is *the living one*. Unless it has the courage to *think* God's livingness, theology will end up as

a mausoleum of God's livingness. The God who may be viewed within this mausoleum certainly deserved the protest of Herbert Braun – a protest which as such ought to be heard, whatever judgment we may reach about Braun's attempt to think the livingness of God.

The objections to the title of this book are obvious. But are they valid? Are they *theological* objections, or are they in fact traditional metaphysical objections? Is it theologically true that everything that is in becoming must therefore also have become? Is it finally settled that transience must follow becoming as sunshine follows rain? At least theologically, Anaximander's maxim is not absolutely final. Theologically, what we call 'becoming' should be understood in its fundamental ontology as a trinitarian category. According to this, God does not leave his present behind him as a past in order to proceed towards a future which is strange to him; rather, in his trinitarian livingness he is 'undividedly the beginning, succession and end, all at once in His own essence'.[1] And so the title of his book tries to indicate what might be called the axiom of the Christian doctrine of God.

The risk of the title, then, is not so much its strangeness but the fact that the account which follows seeks to offer an interpretative paraphrase of some trains of thought of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. Barth himself, however, does not talk explicitly in the same way as the title of this book. That makes it easy for the critics. But: 'Interpretation means saying *the same thing* in other words.'[2] This I have tried to do . . .

EBERHARD JÜNGEL
Berlin, December 1964

[1] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–75) II/1, p. 615. Hereafter cited as *CD*.

[2] *CD* I/1, p. 345.

INTRODUCTION I

THE SITUATION

God's being is discussed. This, at any rate, would be a way of describing the passionate debate in Protestant theology at the present. The leading figures in this debate today are Herbert Braun[1] and Helmut Gollwitzer.[2] However, the debate was prepared a long time ago through the works of Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and Friedrich Gogarten. 'What does it mean to speak of God?' is the question which runs through the whole of Bultmann's work; he asked the question explicitly as early as 1925,[3] and it has expressly determined his thinking right up to his latest publication.[4] Although Friedrich Gogarten's formulation of the question is relatively close to that of Bultmann,[5] Barth has a different formulation. He does not ask what it *means* to speak of God, but, rather, in what sense God *must* be spoken of in order that our speaking is about *God*. And Barth asks that question on the presupposition that speech of God is meaningful and possible as 'man's talk about God on the basis of God's own direction, which fundamentally transcends all human causation, which cannot, then, be put on a human basis, but which simply takes

[1] Cf. 'The Meaning of New Testament Christology', *Journal for Theology and Church* 5 (1968), pp. 89–127; 'The Problem of a New Testament Theology', *Journal for Theology and Church* 1 (1965), pp. 169–83.

[2] H. Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God as Confessed by Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1965).

[3] R. Bultmann, 'What Does It Mean to Speak of God?', in *Faith and Understanding* I (London: SCM Press, 1969), pp. 53–65.

[4] R. Bultmann, 'Der Gottesgedanke und der moderne Mensch', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 60 (1963), pp. 335ff.

[5] Although characteristic differences are certainly not to be overlooked.

place, and has to be acknowledged as a fact'.[6] The distinction between the theological starting-points of Bultmann and Barth may thus be formulated in these very rough terms: for Bultmann, *speech about God* is the proper topic for investigation,[7] whereas for Barth, the question concerns *God's being*.[8] In this way, for both theologians speech about God as Christian speech is bound to the *Word of God*.

Helmut Gollwitzer's book on the *Existence of God as Confessed by Faith* attempts to show, from a position quite close to Barth's theology, the consequences of Bultmann's theology with respect to the question of the being of God. For Gollwitzer, the danger which arises from the trend of Bultmann's theology is that God's being may be thought to be identical with the event of God's encounter with the human person in which human existence is converted, and that 'God' may thus 'be a title for this event and this experience, and that each confession of a real being of God outside of this event is already a fall into an objectivising metaphysics'.[9] Gollwitzer sees this danger become real with Herbert Braun, and the intention of his book is to fend off just this danger.

Two primary objections above all may be raised against this instructive book. First: Gollwitzer sets up a dialectical opposition between the 'necessity of "is" propositions' with reference to God and the 'unserviceableness of "is" propositions' with reference to God: 'in view of what being means in the worldly sense, God "is" not, and in view of what being means in him, all worldly things have no being', although 'the wonder of the creation consists precisely in the fact that he, who alone "is" from eternity to eternity, calls into being that which "is not" . . . He can condescend

[6] *CD* I/1, p. 90.

[7] This explains the formal priority of the hermeneutical problem in the theology of Bultmann and his pupils.

[8] This explains the formal priority of material dogmatic statements over the problem of hermeneutics in the prolegomena to the *Church Dogmatics*. See also the placing of 'ontic necessity and rationality' over the corresponding 'noetic necessity and rationality' in Barth's interpretation of Anselm, which is fundamental for his own dogmatics: *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (London: SCM Press, 1960).

[9] Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God*, p. 34.

to set "alongside" and "outside" of himself other being not identical with himself, and can[10] allow it to live by his free giving – *et tamen Deus manet!*'[11]

The logical difficulties which arise here may be left aside. But a theological problem which arises from these remarks ought not to remain concealed. In view of what 'being' means in the worldly sense, God 'is' not. But this God 'who is not a part of the history of this world, not a subject within history' nevertheless 'appears, acts and speaks as a subject within history – whereby the word "as" does not mean in the guise of, but in the mode of being of a subject within history'.[12] But then the God who encounters us, and therefore *is* 'in the mode of being of a subject within history', possesses 'no being . . . in view of what being means in him', but rather non-being. It would thus not be possible to speak of God's *being* without speaking of his *non-being*.

The problem becomes more acute when one considers that the being of a subject within history is necessarily *finite being*, that is, being towards death. If God is therefore in the mode of being of a subject within history, then non-being must be attributed to him not only 'in view of what being means in him' but also at the same time 'in view of what being means in the worldly sense'. One would then have to say – always in Gollwitzer's sense – that in the mode of being of a subject within history God *has been*.

The problem becomes even more acute when one takes into consideration the fact that all speech about the being of God is (at the very least also) grounded *christologically*. As a 'subject within history', Jesus Christ makes speech about God's being possible, since God has been in the mode of being of *this* 'subject within history'. But then all the problems which have already been mentioned gather together in the christological question of the significance of the *finite* being of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, of the *death* of Jesus Christ for the being of God. If one wants to

[10] 'Can' is certainly to be deleted.

[11] Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God*, p. 210. The words 'being' and 'existence' are used indiscriminately by Gollwitzer.

[12] Ibid., p. 200.

avoid a docetic Christology, then in face of the death of Jesus Christ talk of God's non-being seems inevitable.

We do well not to defuse this problem too hastily by pointing to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; rather, *precisely here* we are to remember the demand formulated by Gollwitzer (following H.-J. Iwand) that 'the question whether God *is* must "be seen through to the end"'.[13] Patristic Christology tried to fix the problem which the death of Jesus Christ posed for the being of God with the theopaschite formula: One of the holy Triad has suffered in the flesh (ἕνα τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος πεπονθέναι σαρχί). And it cannot be accidental that it is the event of Jesus Christ's death on the cross which calls the *being* of God into question and presses for a *trinitarian* statement.

However, before we follow this lead in taking up a second objection against Gollwitzer's book, it will be prudent to sum up the first objection. The question is whether Gollwitzer's intention to think the being of God historically has been adequately carried through. Is this indeed the case when God is thought of on the analogy of the human I–Thou relationship as a 'person' in encounter? Does not a christologically-understood concept of revelation require us to speak of God's being in such a way that we talk of the utterly real, in no way dialectical, menace of nothingness which threatens God existence? Is it not precisely a criterion of the Christian understanding of revelation that in it God's being is exposed to *nothingness* and only on this basis (on this basis, at any rate, without any doubt) nothingness is also exposed to the being of God? Did not Paul proclaim the

[13] Ibid., p. 240. Cf. H.-J. Iwand, 'Glauben und Wissen', in *Nachgelassene Werke* I (Munich: Kaiser, 1962), p. 111. According to Iwand, there is apparently already 'an indirect connection' between 'revelation' and that fact that 'humanity must see the question through to its end, to its furthest point' (ibid.). Iwand sees very perceptively that the consistency of revelation lies in 'being able to pursue to the end the question *An sit Deus* [whether God is], even to Gabbatha and Golgotha', but also sees in this possibility the ground on which 'something like natural theology' might be built, which, 'in worship at the monument of the murdered God', celebrates the fact 'that God is "not an object", cannot be there "objectively"' (ibid., p. 112). In my view, the christological problem identified above has another, more serious, dimension than that of possible polemic against the assertion of the non-objectifiability of God, which as a *final* assertion is actually harmless.

resurrected Lord as the one crucified (1 Cor. 2.2), precisely because of that event in which the being of God encountered nothingness? And was not the confession of the Roman centurion – 'Truly this man was the Son of God!' (Mark 15.39) a confession of the Jesus who cried with a loud voice (an eschatological cry) as he died – indeed, with the Jesus who was already *dead*?

Second: The other objection which may be raised against Gollwitzer's book appears to be diametrically opposite to the first. For while the first objection concerned the *utter weakness* of God's being, which appears in the death of Jesus as the final concretion of his 'being in the mode of being of a subject within history', the second objection asks after the potency which is proper to God's being, on the ground of which God *is able to be* in the mode of being of a subject within history. Gollwitzer certainly insists *that* God can so exist because 'God's being-for-us is a free unmerited gift which is not grounded in anything that is necessary to God . . . but is grounded in his free, sovereign decision, in his "groundless mercy" for which man can therefore only be utterly thankful'.[14] Thus according to Gollwitzer, 'we must not evade or shrink from saying also: *God is in-and-for-himself*'.[15]

Gollwitzer insists on this statement because in this 'being in-and-for-itself' of God there occurs that 'free, sovereign decision' which is to be understood as 'groundless mercy'. Here, however, there arises the question of how God's being 'in-and-for-itself' relates to his being 'in the mode of being of a subject within history'. Gollwitzer stresses that the mode of being of revelation, which is ascertainable only in connection to personal being (in the relationship of I and Thou), has its ground 'not in the essence of God but in his will', so that it is 'not possible *per analogiam* to argue back from it to the essence of God in the sense of how God is constituted, but only to the essence of his will, i.e., from his will as made known in history to his eternal will as the will of his free love'.[16] This is a surprising sentence. Gollwitzer (following Barth, as the context makes clear) wants to avoid an '*analogia entis*' in

[14] Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God*, p. 217.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 186.

favour of an '*analogia relationis*'.[17] It must be asked, however, whether that goal can be attained in that way. Does not this very distinction which Gollwitzer draws between the essence and the will of God (in distinguishing between the 'essence of God in the sense of how God is constituted' from the 'essence of his will') leave a gap in a metaphysical background to the being of God which is indifferent to God's historical acts of revelation?

Clearly Gollwitzer does not *want* to say this. But can this consequence be avoided if the 'essence of his will' which is understood as God's free love is not at the same time understood as the *will of his essence*?[18] Is not God's essence *determined* precisely in his will? Is not precisely God's 'eternal will as the will of his free love' directed towards his revelation by virtue of his free decision as Lord which in such love determines his being and essence? Does not the *being* of God which becomes manifest in and as history compel us to think of God's being, in its power which makes revelation possible, as *already* historical being? And can we think historically of God's being in its potency which makes possible historical revelation in any other way than as trinitarian being? If we wish to think of God's being 'in-and-for-itself', as postulated by Gollwitzer, in a Christian way, that is, in accordance with revelation, are we not *required* to think of this being as being which, in a certain way, is already in advance of history, in that God as Father, Son and Spirit is already so to speak 'ours in advance'?[19] Even in readiness for the powerlessness of death (ἐσταυρώθη ἐξ ἀσθενείας, 2 Cor. 13.4: 'he was crucified in weakness') the historical power of God's revelation must already be grounded in the historical potency of the being of God as Father, Son and Spirit.

Both objections raised here against Gollwitzer's book lead back to the question of why Gollwitzer refrained from defining God's

[17] Ibid., p. 185.

[18] Against this, see Karl Barth, according to whom 'God does not exist otherwise, and . . . He does not will to be understood otherwise, than in the concreteness of life, in the determination of His will, which is as such a determination of His being' (*CD* II/2, p. 79).

[19] *CD* I/1, p. 383; cf. *CD* I/2, p. 34.

being from the beginning in trinitarian terms, and to carry through the thesis of the historicality of the being of God precisely in terms of this definition. His hint that only 'some things, by no means all things, that would have to be said'[20] for the purpose of clarifying the sense of 'Christian talk about the existence and reality of God' may be stated, can scarcely explain this renunciation of trinitarian definition in speaking of God's being, if this definition ought to be dogmatically constitutive of the Christian concept of the being of God. Gollwitzer's hint (which is to be understood as a criticism) that 'Kant had no use for the doctrine of the Trinity'[21] suggests that the assumption is constitutive in this way.

Gollwitzer's book prompts us to catch up on what has been missed there. In what follows, I would like to do this with an interpretation of some corresponding trains of thought of Karl Barth, for Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, which Gollwitzer frequently cites, offers at the same time an implicit critique of Gollwitzer's own interesting book *The Existence of God as Confessed by Faith.* The following interpretation of Barth's talk of the being of God is limited itself to Barth's *Church Dogmatics* and takes the form of a paraphrase of Barth's trains of thought. If contemporary theologians let themselves be encouraged by such a paraphrase to listen seriously and cordially to one another and to combine the necessary criticism of other positions with the readiness for critical examination of their own starting-points, then much would be achieved. If beyond this, however, this kind of paraphrase makes plain the extent to which the hermeneutical work, in which my teacher Ernst Fuchs trained us, demonstrates towards Barth's writings the understanding that is their due, then I shall be personally very pleased. Such understanding remains the prerequisite of Protestant theology in our time – a time which, so far as dogmatics is concerned, appears to have grown tired.

[20] Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God*, p. 202.
[21] Ibid., p. 73 n. 1.

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INTRODUCTION II

RESPONSIBLE SPEECH ABOUT THE BEING OF GOD ACCORDING TO KARL BARTH

Barth thinks as a theologian. This seemingly trivial statement loses all triviality when we reflect that for Barth 'thinking as a theologian' can mean nothing other than 'thinking consistently and exclusively as a theologian'. What this involves is shown by his question concerning the being of God. This question does not itself arise out of its own thinking, nor does it make up a problem which sooner or later asks itself questions which are more or less radical, calling something or everything into question. The theological question concerning the being of God involves thinking which *follows* the being of God. This means, however, that the being of God which is the subject of theological questioning is prevenient.[1] The predicate is to be taken strictly. God's being *goes before* the theological question about God's being; it is not in some way *presupposed* by this inquiry. All really radical questioning transcends human presuppositions. And, even when the being of God was asserted (and thus thought and exposed to questioning) as the presupposition of thinking (and so also of questioning), there was always a questioning (and thinking and asserting) which knew that it was obliged to transcend *this* human presupposition. As object of theological questioning, the being of God cannot be such a presupposition. It is much more a matter that the being of God *goes before* all theological questioning in such a way that in its movement it paves the way for questioning, leading the questioning for the first time onto the path of thinking. On this path, the question concerning the being of

[1] Cf. *CD* I/1, pp. 5–7.

God follows that being reflectively. In this way, God's being is prevenient.[2] The path on which the question concerning the being of God is led by God himself is no general path. Barth categorically rejected the view that theology is concerned with a general way of thinking. Such a view would fail to grasp that the theological question concerning the being of God has been led to a path along which the being of God has *itself already proceeded,* thereby clearing a way and making a path. The path along which the question concerning the being of God has been directed and along which it must proceed is thus a particular path. The theological concept with which this particular path is correctly grasped is revelation.

The assertion that the *being* of God *precedes* (human questioning) seems strange. This strangeness should not be blunted by describing as anthropomorphic or mythological the mode of expression of which we have made use. By doing that, we would explain nothing; all we would do would be to play down a problem. Over against this, it seems more necessary to rehearse this strangeness in such a way that it can be grasped *as* strangeness; the strangeness might then prove itself to be something precious. In what follows, an attempt will be made to elucidate what it means that the being of God proceeds, and thus precedes all human questioning. In this attempt we face the hermeneutical problem in its most concentrated form, in that we devote our attention to the doctrine of God. The being of God is the hermeneutical problem of theology. Or, more precisely: the fact that the being of God *proceeds* is precisely the hermeneutical problem. For only because the being of God proceeds is there an encounter between God and humanity. And the hermeneutical problem is grounded in precisely this encounter between God and humanity which

[2] When Thomas Bonhoeffer says (*Die Gotteslehre des Thomas von Aquin als Sprachproblem* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1961], p. 3) that theology 'is required where talk of God's Word is in vogue, without God's itself occurring', we would add that theology is made possible where talk of God's Word as talk of God's being is in vogue, because God's being took place as God's Word itself. Theology *can* proceed along the path of thinking when it follows the Word of God. But it must itself *proceed* along this path and *itself face* all the problems which make this path difficult.

has its origin in the movement of God's being. The encounter between God and humanity which has its origin in the movement of God's being is, according to Barth, first and above all the encounter between the electing God and elected humanity, which is an event in Jesus Christ. Thus the existence of the man Jesus confronts us with the hermeneutical problem, both with regard to our understanding of God and with regard to our understanding of the self and the world: 'At no level or time can we have to do with God without having also to do with this man. We cannot conceive ourselves and the world without first conceiving this man with God as the witness of the gracious purpose with which God willed and created ourselves and the world and in which we may exist in it and with it.'[3]

[3] *CD* IV/2, p. 33.

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I

GOD'S BEING REVEALED

If we take seriously the claim that, in Barth's sense, 'God's being *proceeds*', then we shall have to begin our question concerning God's being, not with the doctrine of God in the narrower sense, but with the place where the particular path of the being of God as revelation is conceived. Without any doubt this happens in the Christology of the *Church Dogmatics*, which in this way not only determines the *Dogmatics* in its entirety but accompanies it in the form of fundamental paragraphs. The part of the *Church Dogmatics* which deals especially with Christology is its doctrine of reconciliation. In the doctrine of reconciliation, the subject matter which we have summarised with the expression 'God's being proceeds' is indicated with two headings which correspond in form with each other. In connection with the orthodox doctrines of the 'state of humiliation' and the 'state of exaltation', in the chapter entitled 'Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant', Barth speaks of the '*Way* of the Son of God into the Far Country'; in the chapter which mirrors this, 'Jesus Christ, the Servant as Lord', Barth speaks of the '*Homecoming* of the Son of Man'.[1] 'The Way of the Son of God

[1] Barth thus co-ordinates the classical doctrines of the states of Christ with that of the threefold office of Christ. The priestly office (Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant) is co-ordinated with the state of humiliation; the kingly office (Jesus Christ, the Servant as Lord) is co-ordinated with the state of exaltation. But, alongside the two offices connected to the two states, the prophetic office (Jesus Christ, the True Witness) is, as an object of theological knowledge, not an expansion of the 'material knowledge of the event of reconciliation', but designates the revelatory dimension of the event of reconciliation which is not to be separated from that event. 'For as it takes place in its perfection, and with no need of supplement, it also expresses, discloses, mediates and reveals itself' (*CD* IV/3, p. 8). One can quite correctly formulate the matter thus:

into the Far Country' and the 'Homecoming of the Son of Man' portray the *movement* of God's being, but in such a way that thereby the origin of all the ways of God becomes visible. This origin is one which takes place in the being of God himself, and which is in no way *strange* to God. Barth speaks, therefore, of God's 'primal decision'[2] which took place in God's eternal election of grace. The Christology of the doctrine of reconciliation, therefore, points with strict necessity back to the doctrine of election. God preceded the far country into which he went, in that he decided to go there. This precedence of God in his primal decision shows that God's being not only 'proceeds' on the way into the far country but that God's being is *in movement* from eternity. God's being is moved being: 'God is who He is

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the prophetic office of Jesus Christ discloses his being in his work of reconciliation as a speech-event. For 'reconciliation is not a dark or dumb event, but perspicuous and vocal. It is not closed in upon itself, but moves out and communicates itself. It is event only as it expresses, discloses and mediates itself, as it is not merely real but true, and as true as it is real' (ibid.); here is Barth's starting-point for overcoming the 'subject–object schema'.

In view of such statements (by no means isolated in the *Church Dogmatics*), it is not really comprehensible why in his *Evangelical Theology* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963), Barth rather grumpily banishes the category of speech-event to the realm of practical theology, when the category is so relevant to the problem treated in the prophetic office: 'The special problem-area of practical theology is what is today somewhat bombastically termed the "language-event". This is then customarily – and quite unsuitably – presented as the basic problem of exegesis, and, where possible, also of dogmatics' (p. 182). Speech-event is (at least for Ernst Fuchs) a christological category which, as such, also has general hermeneutical significance. It therefore actually has its place in the fundamental problems of exegesis and dogmatics, as long as exegesis and dogmatics are fundamentally concerned with the Word of God. If, in the category of speech-event, it is a matter of conceiving God's Word as event (and so God's revelation as mystery) then this concern can scarcely be compared to the *ars amandi* [art of love] which always has priority over 'a really juicy love-story'. No, if theology had not learned it from Hegel, it would have to let itself be reminded by Barth 'that the source of knowledge of Reformation theology had been the word, the word of God, the word of truth. But this also means, the event of God, the event of truth . . . an event at which he for whom it is to be an event must be present; an event which by repetition, and by man's renewal of his presence, must ever become event anew' (K. Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* [London: SCM Press, 1972], p. 416. So why not speech-event?

[2] *CD* IV/2, p. 32, and above all *CD* II/2, p. 9 and elsewhere.

in the act of revelation.'[3] Equally, however, God's primal decision teaches us to understand God's *being concretely*. God's primal decision to go into the far country is certainly not a decision forced upon him from the far country, not something *foreign* to him, but his *free* decision. Moreover, as God's decision to go into the far country in which he *suffers* what is foreign to him for the benefit of humanity threatened in the strange land, this decision is an act of *love*. Thus God's primal decision, realised in our history, allows us to perceive 'the being of God as the one who loves in freedom'.[4] The doctrine of election necessarily points back to the doctrine of God proper. At the same time, the doctrine of election also points back to the doctrine of the Trinity in the *Church Dogmatics*. For God's way into the far country is indeed the way of the *Son* of God; in that primal decision, in the unity of the *Spirit* between the *Father* who sends the Son upon this way, and the Son who is obedient, the Son was destined to be united with the man Jesus. Thus God's moved being will certainly have to be handled – most especially in the doctrine of the Trinity – as a being moved by *God*. It is therefore not surprising that Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is found at the beginning of his *Church Dogmatics*. For the doctrine of the Trinity provides 'an answer to the question of the God who reveals Himself in revelation'.[5]

However, because revelation concerns the being of God, since it is God who reveals himself there, the doctrine of the Trinity is 'a constituent part, the decisive part, of the doctrine of God'.[6] This part is decisive because the doctrine of the Trinity makes a fundamental distinction between 'the Christian doctrine of God as Christian' and 'the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God or concepts of revelation'.[7] Because for Barth the 'problem of the doctrine of the Trinity' necessarily arises from our encounter

[3] *CD* II/1, p. 257.
[4] Ibid.
[5] *CD* I/1, pp. 311f.
[6] Ibid., p. 312.
[7] Ibid., p. 301.

with the Bible, then when we ask after the being of God with 'the question put to the Bible about revelation',[8] the solution of this problem is also decisive for the Christian concept of revelation and thereby for the understanding of the being of God. Hence Barth places the doctrine of the Trinity at the beginning of his *Dogmatics*[9] in order that 'its content be decisive and controlling for the whole of dogmatics'.[10]

This location, which lets the doctrine of the Trinity stand at the entrance of the *Church Dogmatics* as a whole, is a *hermeneutical* decision of the greatest relevance. This is already seen formally in the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is to be found in the prolegomena, that is, at exactly the place where the treatment of hermeneutical problems is expected. For Barth also hermeneutical problems are – despite other misleading statements – in no way merely more or less unpleasant preliminary questions. It is more that Barth's insight that, without 'anticipating material dogmas', neither a doctrine of Scripture nor, even less, a doctrine of the Word of God can be formulated,[11] may provide evidence that, at the point where he *decides hermeneutically* about the path of the *Dogmatics* (both formally

[8] Ibid., p. 303.

[9] As, by the way, Peter Lombard had already done in his *Sentences*, who was censured by M. J. Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1948) for the fact 'that in the doctrine of God the doctrine of the divine essence is not highlighted and set out first . . . and that the concrete subsistence of God is discussed immediately' (p. 455). The arrangement of Lombard's *Sentences*, in which the doctrine of God in general is subsumed under the doctrine of the Trinity, was first broken by Aquinas, who first of all treats *ea, quae ad essentiam divinam pertinent* [those things pertaining to the divine essence] (*Summa Theologiae* 1.2–26), and only in the next part turns to *ea, quae pertinent ad distinctionem personarum* [those things pertaining to the distinction of the persons] (*STh* 1.27–43). In Catholic dogmatic theology this division has prevailed to our own day, a fact expressly lamented by Karl Rahner, 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise "De Trinitate"', *Theological Investigations* IV (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), pp. 77–102. Rahner's statement that the dividing up of the doctrine of God into two parts – not yet completed in Alexander's *Summa* – was accomplished 'first in Thomas from motives as yet not really explained' (p. 83), may be supplemented by referring to Thomas Bonhoeffer's interpretation of Aquinas' doctrine of God in *Die Gotteslehre des Thomas von Aquin*, §§19–21.

[10] *CD* I/1, p. 303.

[11] Ibid., p. 43.

and materially), he sees himself compelled to decide about the hermeneutic by which he is deciding. The placing of the doctrine of the Trinity at the beginning of the *Church Dogmatics* is therefore a hermeneutical decision of the greatest relevance because, on the one hand, the whole *Church Dogmatics* finds its hermeneutical foundation here, and, on the other hand, with this decision hermeneutics itself finds its own starting-point. It is advisable to clarify this matter from Barth's reflections on the 'root of the doctrine of the Trinity'. We proceed, first, by directing our attention to Barth's resistance to the different variations of the *vestigia trinitatis* as possible roots of the doctrine of the Trinity, and then by turning to the detailed statements about the real (in Barth's sense) root of the doctrine of the Trinity.

(a) The vestigium trinitatis *as a hermeneutical problem*

The history of the dogma of the Trinity poses the problem of the *vestigium trinitatis*. In the early church, in Scholasticism, in the Reformers (Luther – 'in his Table Talk at least')[12] and in modern theology, both Protestant and Catholic, a great variety of attempts have been made to show a similarity between certain structures of created reality and the structure of the being of God conceived as Trinity. It was thought that it was possible to discover 'an essential trinitarian disposition supposedly immanent in some created realities quite apart from their possible conscription by God's revelation' as 'traces of the trinitarian Creator God in being as such'.[13] If one accepts that there are such *vestigia trinitatis* and that they can be identified as such, the problem arises whether these are not to be regarded as the root of the doctrine of the Trinity. This problem is 'of the greatest importance, not only for the question of the root of the doctrine of the Trinity, but for that of revelation, of the

[12] Ibid., p. 336; and, incidentally, not only in his table talk but also in preaching (cf. *Weimarer Ausgabe* 4, pp. 597, 600, 602).

[13] *CD* I/1, p. 334.

grounding of theology in revelation alone, and finally even for that of the meaning and possibility of theology'.[14] Without doubt, we are concerned here with a hermeneutical problem.

After reporting on the 'material' which at the time was deployed in maintaining the *vestigia trinitatis*, Barth voices his impression that 'there must be "something in" the connection between the Trinity and all the "trinities" to which reference is made here. . . . The only question is what'.[15] This question he then discusses as a problem – indeed, as 'the problem . . . of theological language'.[16]

If one takes seriously the assurances of the Church Fathers and the Scholastics that real perception of *vestigia trinitatis* can happen only *trinitate posita*,[17] that one has not to understand God from things made, but things made from God (*Deum ex factis, sed ea, quae facta sunt, ex Deo*),[18] then one will have to concede that in their efforts to discover *vestigia trinitatis* they were 'in search of language for the mystery of God which was known to them by revelation'.[19] There is 'something in' their efforts, in the sense that they were searching for the right language. For 'theology and the Church, and even the Bible itself, speak no other language than that of this world', on the presupposition 'that in this language God's revelation might be referred to, witness might be given, God's Word might be proclaimed, dogma might be formulated and declared'.[20] According to Barth, what marks out 'the discoverers of *vestigia trinitatis*' in their commonality with the Bible, the Church and theology, is this: in that they spoke the language of this world, *in* this language they were searching for language for the trinitarian mystery of God. In this, theology faces the question of the *capacity* of language. For Barth, the decisive question in

[14] Ibid., p. 335.
[15] Ibid., p. 339.
[16] Ibid., p. 341.
[17] Aquinas, *STh* 1.32.1.
[18] *Adversus Haereses* II.xxv.1.
[19] *CD* I/1, p. 330.
[20] Ibid., p. 339.

his debate with the 'discovers' of the *vestigia trinitatis* is whether the capacity to speak about God in the language of the world 'is to be understood as that of the language and consequently of the world or man, or whether it is to be regarded as a venture which is, as it were, ascribed to the language, and consequently of the world or man, from without'.[21]

This, then, is the question: what capacity does language possess? Barth always presupposes that it is a question of language 'shaped in form and content by the creaturely nature of the world and also conditioned by the limitations of humanity: the language in which man as he is, as sinful and corrupt man, wrestles with the world as it encounters him and as he sees and tries to understand it'.[22] Does this language have the capacity to grasp revelation? There is no dispute about the fact *that* revelation is spoken about in this language, indeed, appropriately spoken about. The dispute rather concerns the *possibility* of this state of affairs.

In that the possibility is disputed in this sense, in that the question is not only *how* we ought to speak about God's revelation but rather what makes such speech about God's revelation possible, we go beyond the horizon of the problem of a hermeneutic oriented to the relation of indication between sounds, words and things; beyond, that is, what is essentially a hermeneutic of signification.[23] More is at stake when it is

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] By 'hermeneutic of signification' is meant an account of understanding oriented to the ontological distinction of *res* [thing] and *signum* [sign]. In Augustine we read: *Omnis doctrina vel rerum est vel signorum; sed res per signa discuntur* ['All teaching is teaching of either things or signs, but things are learnt through signs'] (*De doctrina christiana* I.4). On this see the brilliant treatment by R. Lorenz, 'Die Wissenschaftslehre Augustins', *Zeitschrift zur Kirchengeschichte* 67 (1955), pp. 29ff. and 213ff. The beginnings of the hermeneutic of signification are already prepared in Parmenides: on this, see E. Fink, *Zur ontologischen Frühgeschichte von Raum-Zeit-Bewegung* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1957), above all pp. 53ff., and E. Jüngel, 'Zum Ursprung der Analogie bei Parmenides und Heraklit' in *Entsprechungen. Gott–Wahrheit–Mensch* (Munich: Kaiser, 1980), pp. 52–102. On this problem see also Thomas Bonhoeffer, who draws the apt distinction between 'hermeneutic of signification' and 'hermeneutic of reiteration' (*Die Gotteslehre des Thomas von Aquin*, p. 124 n. 4).

asserted 'not that the language could grasp the revelation, but that revelation . . . could grasp the language'.[24] With this, theology moves into a sphere of problems which is determined hermeneutically by the opposition of *analogia entis* and *analogia fidei.* This, at any rate, is how Barth understands it when he fears that in the doctrine of the *vestigia trinitatis* we are concerned – probably counter to the intention of its discoverers – with 'a genuine *analogia entis*'.[25]

[24] *CD* I/1, p. 340.

[25] Ibid., p. 334. See also p. 335: 'The question is whether these *vestigia trinitatis*, in virtue of the conclusions that are to be drawn from their acknowledgement . . . do not compel us to pass over first to the easy double track of "revelation" and "primal revelation" (P. Althaus) and then very quickly from this half-measure to the genuine Roman Catholic theology of the *analogia entis.*'

In the face of such statements it may be surprising that in his doctrine of reconciliation (*CD* IV/3) Barth sought to win back a 'clear and unequivocal sense' for the problematic defined with the concept of 'primal revelation' or 'revelation of creation' (ibid., p. 140). What is meant here? Barth wants to reckon with the fact that the event of reconciliation in Jesus Christ occurred in a specific 'place', at a specific 'location'. This sphere is the creation, God's 'creaturely world' (ibid., p. 137). The creation is the Creator's *good* work. God preserves his creation as a good work. In spite of the destructiveness of human sin, God preserves the creation *to the end*, since he has defined it as the sphere and location in which reconciliation will take place. The 'work of His created grace has in view His reconciling grace' (ibid., p. 138). This relation between creation and reconciliation (covenant) was defined in *CD* III/1 in such a way that the creation is 'the external basis of the covenant which conversely is its internal basis' (ibid., p. 137). The doctrine of reconciliation, however, has not only to think through what this relation means for reconciliation, but also what it means for *creation.*

On the basis of his reconciling action, God is 'the Guarantor, Sustainer and Protector of His creaturely world' (ibid., p. 138). 'To the faithfulness of the Creator . . . there corresponds the persistence and constancy of the creature' (ibid.). This constancy is not, however, grounded in itself. And *in its own way* the creaturely world expresses the fact that in its constancy it is not what it is from itself. This is its self-witness. But just as creation owes its existence to the faithfulness of the Creator, so it also owes to him 'this its language . . . Like its persistence, its self-witness and lights are not extinguished by the corruption of the relationship between God and man through the sin of man, his pride and sloth and falsehood' (ibid., p. 139). The language of the self-witness of the creaturely world is certainly first discovered through God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and marked out as the language of the *created* world; but as precisely this, it is not silenced by the language of revelation. It is, to be sure, not God's revelation, but in a limited sense in it there occur revelations 'of the *creatura* or κτίσις itself' (ibid., p. 140).

It is important for what follows that Barth agrees with those who taught the doctrine of the *vestigia trinitatis* that, starting from revelation, 'enough elements could be found' in language

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Of what does this 'self-witness of the creature' (ibid., p. 157) speak? It speaks of the 'quality of divinely created terrestrial being' (ibid., p. 141), of 'lights', 'words' and 'truths' which the intelligible universe makes known to the intelligent creature. In the 'converse of the cosmos with itself' (ibid., p. 142), the order, structure and constancy of the world created by God become visible as the *truth* of the world which God created. The *worldly*, not divine, truth is the 'obstacle to the onrush of chaos into the terrestrial life' (ibid, p. 141), that is, it shows 'that the Creator is faithful to His creature' (ibid., p. 153). Here there must be a 'sharp' distinction: In themselves these truths and lights of the cosmos have 'nothing whatever to do with . . . God as the Founder and Lord of His covenant with man' (ibid., p. 151); they are 'not a covenant of God with man' (ibid., p. 143); they can, however, in the light of the one revelation of God be set in relation to the covenant (ibid., p. 157; cf. p. 159). What makes this revelation *possible* is the 'irrevocable', prototypical Word of God (cf. p. 160), from which these creaturely self-witnesses (so problematical and relative in contrast to God's self-witness) *receive* 'great practical value, force and significance' (ibid., p. 163) as they 'reflect the eternal light of God as they answer His word and as they correspond to His truth' (ibid., p. 164). The 'change of form which takes place with the self-declaration of God' (ibid., p. 157) can *make* the self-witnesses of the cosmos – of the world – into 'parables of the kingdom of heaven' (ibid., pp. 112, 115, 117, etc.). It is certainly true that 'the world as such can produce no parables of the kingdom of heaven' (ibid., p. 143). Yet, because the *whole* creation as the 'external basis of the covenant' is defined by God to be 'the theatre of His glory and therefore the recipient and bearer of His Word' (ibid., p. 137), it is all the more true that 'in the world reconciled by God in Jesus Christ there is no secular sphere abandoned by Him or withdrawn from His control' (ibid., p. 119). God allows the secular sphere to *become* the parable of his word, to become a 'true word' that is 'laid upon [the] lips' of the godless creature (ibid., p. 125). The secular sphere speaks *of* God because God speaks *to* it and so allows it to speak of God. Note: this language is not a capacity of the world, but the 'capacity of Jesus Christ' (ibid., p. 118). The capacity of Jesus Christ, however, goes beyond the so-called 'sphere of the Bible and the Church' (ibid., p. 117) and causes humanity 'quite apart from and even in face of their own knowledge or volition' to speak 'words which can seriously be called true' (ibid., p. 118), so that 'even from the mouth of Balaam the well-known voice of the God Shepherd may sound, and it is not to be ignored in spite of its sinister origin' (ibid., p. 119). The Church 'has to eavesdrop in the world at large' (ibid., p. 117), to listen to the words which have been qualified, to the free communications of Jesus Christ (ibid., pp. 131, 133, etc.), to separate them critically, test and distinguish them (ibid., pp. 125f.). Parables of the kingdom of heaven are not a special 'source of revelation' (ibid., p. 133); they do not serve as the foundation of dogma about revelation, but rather they are at the service of 'the awakening power of the universal prophecy of Jesus Christ' in which they 'have their final origin and meaning' (ibid., pp. 128f.).

'to be able to speak about revelation . . . to some extent intelligibly and perspicuously'.[26] In the 'more or less felicitous discoveries of *vestigia' trinitatis* he sees an 'expression . . . of confidence in the power of revelation over reason'.[27] To that extent it is not a matter of an *analogia entis* but rather of the thoroughly legitimate 'attempt to fashion theological language'.[28] The problem of such an attempt to speak theological language consists in the fact that this language 'can only be the language of the world' which, however, 'must still believe at root, cost what it will, that contrary to the natural capabilities of this language, it can and should speak of God's revelation in

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With this has Barth not followed that 'easy double track of "revelation" and "primal revelation"?' (ibid., p. 335). Hardly. All that he wanted to say was that God's revelation does not take place apart from the creation which was determined to be the sphere of revelation, in the same way that Jesus Christ speaks the language of the world in order that the creature may be made to hear. But if Jesus Christ can speak intelligibly in that language, the language of the world has its own truth and value which consists precisely in being the language of the world created by God.

In spite of Barth's formulation (*CD* IV/2, p. 725), it would certainly be better not to assert that in the statements just noted Barth revived the patristic doctrine of the *logos spermatikos* [spermatic word] (over against G. Koch, 'Gotteserkenntnis ohne Christus?', *Evangelische Theologie* 23 [1963], p. 584). What Carl-Heinz Ratschow in his otherwise very valuable dogmatic study *Gott existiert* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966), pp. 63f. proposes about the interpretation of *CD* IV/3, pp. 110–65 bypasses Barth's own intentions with astonishing assurance. In his fascinating analysis of Lutheran orthodoxy, Ratschow shows convincingly that the current judgment about Protestant orthodoxy stands in need of revision. And Barth's protest against Protestant orthodoxy over matters concerning natural knowledge of God certainly needs to be corrected and specified historically. If it is true that 'in the seventeenth century there was scarcely a theologian' who wanted to say more about natural knowledge of God than Barth in *CD* IV/3, we would still need to reckon with the fact that what Barth protested against in the fathers of Protestant orthodoxy was the beginnings of what he set out to combat in the twentieth century. And after reviewing the matter thoroughly, it would be very hard to maintain that in the sketch in *CD* IV/3 Barth has 'fundamentally changed' his view of these questions. As for Protestant orthodoxy, historical fidelity compels us to note that, despite a number of errors of historical judgment, few have done as much for the theological honouring of those theologians as Barth. It is quite clear that he has gone into their school with great attention and love.

[26] *CD* I/1, p. 340.

[27] Ibid., p. 341.

[28] Ibid., p. 335.

this language as theological language'.[29] Revelation cannot be brought to speech 'by a possibility of logical construction'.[30] In Barth's sense that would be precisely an *analogia entis.* But the language in which revelation should be able to come to speech must, 'as it were, be commandeered'[31] by revelation. Where such 'commandeering' of the language by revelation for revelation takes place, then there is a *gain to language.* The gain consists in the fact that God comes to speech as God. Over against this, in the opposite case, one would have to speak of a *loss of revelation* if revelation were commandeered by language on the fundamental structure of the *analogia entis per analogiam nominum.*[32] The loss consists in the fact that God does not come to speech as God but as *nomen.*[33] Accordingly, the opposition of *analogia*

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., p. 346.

[31] Ibid., p. 340.

[32] By *analogia nominum,* we understand the undertaking which, on the basis of certain presuppositions, claims to be able to capture revelation from language. This presupposes (*a*) that language consists mainly of *nomina* [names]; (b) that these *nomina* stand in a sense-structure; (*c*) that this sense-structure presents a referential context; (*d*) that this referential context is constituted by signification. Cf. M. Reding, '*Analogia entis* und *analogia nominum*', *Evangelische Theologie* 23 (1963), pp. 225f. T. Bonhoeffer, *Die Gotteslehre des Thomas von Aquin,* p. 135, points out the consequence: 'In a language which interprets its interpretation of the world as timelessly valid for the truth of its *species intelligibilis* in which time is overlooked, one appeals to a *species intelligibilis* in which time is overseen . . . This one *species intelligibilis* is not a concept of God . . . but the attack on God in which language has taken to itself rights to eternity.'

[33] On this, see E. Jüngel, 'Metaphorical Truth', in *Theological Essays* I (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), pp. 16–71. The pseudotheological attempt (repudiated by Barth) to bring revelation to speech through the possibility of logical construction corresponds to myth in so far as, with Bultmann, we understand myth as a human attempt to speak 'of the other world in terms of this world, and of the gods in terms derived from human life' ('The New Testament and Mythology', in H. W. Barthsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth* I [London: SPCK, 1960], p. 10). Bultmann's statement that 'myth contains elements which demand its own criticism – namely, its imagery with its apparent claim to objective validity. The real purpose of myth is to speak of a transcendent power which controls the world and man, but that purpose is impeded and obscured by the terms in which it is expressed' (ibid., p. 22) is true for myths generally, and to that extent presents no special problems for Christian theology (as the fragments of Xenophanes and Heraclitus show). This statement is theologically relevant in Bultmann's sense only in that in the New Testament the attempt was

entis and *analogia fidei* can be characterised thus: *analogia entis* (*nominum*) leads to a loss of revelation; *analogia fidei* leads to a gain to language, to the possibility of theological speech about God.

It is of course a question, here and there, of an analogy. And so we must ask what protects theology in its necessary use of analogy (which appears clearly to be not only unavoidable, but even indispensable in attempting to speak theological language) from setting revelation and language in a false relation and thus from speaking inappropriately of revelation. According to Barth, we speak inappropriately of revelation when revelation is not *interpreted* but *illustrated.* For 'revelation will submit only to interpretation and not to illustration'.[34] The correct relation between revelation and language is therefore that of interpretation. It is thus clear from what has been said that the interpretation of revelation by language is an event in which language is 'commandeered' by revelation, and that the interpretation of revelation is thus a 'venture' which is *demanded* of language 'from without'.[35] At the same time, however, this demand on language must be understood in such a way that revelation grants *courage* to language, so that interpretation is made possible.

The courage which revelation grants to language as a demand upon language is, however, to be strictly distinguished from the 'desire to illustrate revelation'.[36] The desire to illustrate

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made to bring revelation to speech in mythological words. Here the motive for criticism of the myth emerges from the myth only in so far as the mythological language of the New Testament speaks of revelation. Demythologisation as a theological task is thus fundamentally distinguished from a criticism of myth which emerges from myth itself. Demythologisation as a theological task can only be the interpretative reiteration of the capture of language through revelation, in which the mythological element of a myth is repudiated as an attempt to capture language through revelation. Bultmann's programme of demythologisation presupposes the theological insight that, as kerygma, the New Testament texts are language captured by revelation, but have not remained free from the contrary movement because they are human language of their time.

[34] *CD* I/1, p. 345.

[35] Ibid., p. 339 [ET altered – tr.].

[36] Ibid., p. 345.

does not spring from the demand upon language but from language's own capacity. Barth knows very well that there is 'no interpretation of revelation – not excepting the more careful dogmatics and even Church dogma itself – [which] does not contain elements of illustration'.[37] Nevertheless, for him 'the desire to illustrate revelation, let alone the claim that illustration is essential, let alone the assertion that this or that is an illustration of revelation', is nothing less than 'a desertion of revelation' and therefore 'unbelief'.[38] For Barth, the doctrine of the *vestigia trinitatis* moves from interpretation of revelation to illustration of revelation, a move which should 'obviously . . . not take place in theological language'.[39] And he therefore rejects 'the doctrine of the *vestigia*'.[40]

The relation between interpretation and illustration requires further explanation. Barth's informative statement, 'Interpretation means saying *the same thing* in other words. Illustration means saying the same thing *in other words*',[41] is certainly not exhaustive, but does point in a definite direction. It is clearly a problem of the *identity* of revelation. Interpretation safeguards the identity of revelation in that it brings revelation (and only revelation) to speech *as* revelation. Illustration endangers the identity of revelation in that *with* revelation it *also* brings language (*nomina*) to speech as revelation. But where, alongside revelation, language (*nomina*) is also brought to speech as revelation, revelation is no longer safeguarded as revelation *and* language is no longer safeguarded as language[42] *Thus every*

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., p. 346.

[41] Ibid., p. 345.

[42] Here the hermeneutical interest of theology and its use of the historical-critical method meet. In that it investigates the language (of the text) as language (and not as revelation), the historical-critical method seeks to acquaint itself with revelation in the language of the text. The historical-critical method thus orients itself (exclusively) to the *captures* which revelation *made* when it *came* to speech. The hermeneutical task of theology consists in bringing revelation to speech as revelation in carrying out the historical-critical method. Hermeneutics is interested in the *capturing* of language by revelation, as it can be perceived in the captures (texts). Hermeneutics seeks to

loss of revelation is at the same time a loss of language. When language seeks to be itself revelation, it loses itself as language.[43] But where revelation commandeers language, there takes place *the Word of God.* The Word of God *brings* language to its true essence.[44]

If in the interpretation of revelation a gain to language occurs, and this gain is itself grounded in the event of revelation, then we must now ask about the possibility of this gain to language, and therefore about the possibility of the interpretation of revelation. We have already seen that it is a question of the capacity of revelation. Yet in what sense *can* revelation make demands of language? It can do so only because, as revelation, revelation itself speaks. 'If we know what revelation

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preserve revelation as revelation and language as language in such a way at the very place where revelation takes place, where God comes to speech. Hermeneutics is interested in the texts as the captures of revelation which has come to speech, since it is interested in the reiteration of the event of the capture of language which occurs when revelation takes place. Thus the hermeneutical task of theology is the most consistent *essence* of the historical-critical method in theology. And thus 'the historical-critical method of interpretation of biblical texts has done its job when the compulsion to preach results from the text' (E. Fuchs, 'Die der Theologie durch die historisch-kritische Methode auferlegte Besinnung', in *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1960], p. 226).

Thus by preaching we are to understand the *reiteration* of the capture of language through revelation. Because it is a matter of reiteration, the preacher preaches on biblical *texts.* The fact that this reiteration can only happen *in language* is a hint about the *essence* of language *as* language (but not, indeed, as revelation). The essence of language as language is that God brings himself to speech by capturing language. Thus language becomes the free place of encounter. Where this takes place, language is brought to its essence. Language is brought to its essence where God brings himself to speech. The essence of language is thus the *event* of the Word of God (cf. T. Bonhoeffer, 'Sprache', *RGG*^{3}, esp. pp. 280f.), but not the *presence to hand* of the *nomen* God.

[43] Loss or gain to language does not therefore consist in increase or decrease of language (*nomina*). The *analogia nominum* is very eloquent. Revelation is not a gain to language in the sense that it says everything that language permits to be said, but in that it says something *specific.* Language is a matter, we might say, of selection.

[44] Language must be captured by revelation to be brought to its true essence. 'Now the lilies and ravens of the world can be defined – and not our cares. But it is not the raven which is the Word of God, but the word: "Consider the ravens . . ."' (E. Fuchs, 'Protokol der hermeneutischen Sozietät, Marburg' [20.6.1963], p. 19).

is, even in deliberately speaking about it we shall be content to let revelation speak for itself.'[45] The revelation of God thus does not 'commandeer' language as a dumb aggressor but rather gets involved with and in language through speaking. The revelation of God is no silent demand for language, but rather by speaking revelation makes demands of language. Thus *the revelation of God itself is that which makes the interpretation of revelation possible.* This is because 'revelation is the self-interpretation of God'.[46] But as the *self-interpretation of God,* revelation is the root of the doctrine of the Trinity. Consequently, the doctrine of the Trinity is the interpretation of revelation and thus the interpretation of the being of God which is made possible by revelation as God's self-interpretation.

A hermeneutic which asks after God's self-interpretation of God is essentially something different from the Aristotelian hermeneutic of signification. This is true *despite* many echo chords of this hermeneutic of signification in Barth's *Church Dogmatics.*

(b) Revelation as God's self-interpretation

'Revelation is *Dei loquentis persona* [God speaking in person].'[47] When we ask about the being of God, we must therefore allow ourselves to be guided by the answer which revelation sets before us loud and clear, because in God's revelation 'God's Word is identical with God Himself'.[48] And since in revelation 'the fulness of the original self-existent being of God's Word reposes and lives',[49] then revelation is that event in which the *being of God* comes to word.

However, for Barth the being of God does not come to speech only as the content of revelation. Revelation is, indeed, God's self-interpretation, and so an event that does not allow itself to

[45] *CD* I/1, p. 347.
[46] Ibid., p. 311.
[47] Ibid., p. 304.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., p. 305.

be separated into form and content. 'The distinction between form and content cannot be applied to the biblical concept of revelation. When revelation is an event according to the Bible, there is no second question as to what its content might be.'[50] But since in the event of revelation God reveals himself, we have to do with God as much in the *event* (1) of revelation as well as in *that which is revealed* (2) in this event. And since God is therefore manifest in revelation because *he* (3) has revealed himself, in revelation we have to do with the being of God in a *threefold* way. If, therefore, the being of God is perceived in revelation, then we know 'that the God who reveals Himself in the Bible must also be known in His revealing . . . if He is to be known' at all.[51] For God 'in unimpaired unity is the revealer, the revelation and the revealedness', or as it may also be put, 'the revealing God and the event of revelation and its effect on man'.[52] Thus: God is subject, predicate and object of the event of revelation. The question of what God is may, according to the biblical witness, be answered only when immediately and from the beginning we answer 'the two other questions: What is He doing? and: What does He effect?'.[53] Already in *Die christliche Dogmatik* Barth considered that the Christian concept of revelation would have to be found in the answer to 'the questions concerning subject, predicate and object of the proposition: "God speaks", "*Deus dixit*"' and regarded this as the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity.[54] And, in spite of much opposition, he held fast to this in the *Church Dogmatics.*

In revelation, therefore, we have to do with *one* internally-distinguished being of God. The *oneness* of this internally-distinguished being of God is grounded in the fact that revelation is 'not another over against God' but 'the repetition of God'.[55] In that God *can* reiterate himself, in that he

[50] Ibid., p. 306.
[51] Ibid., p. 298.
[52] Ibid., p. 299.
[53] Ibid., p. 297.
[54] K. Barth, *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf* (Munich: Kaiser, 1927), p. 127.
[55] *CD* I/1, p. 299.

accomplishes this reiteration and in that he *has* thus reiterated himself, the internally-distinguished being of God can be perceived in its *differentiation.* The doctrine of the Trinity reflects upon the unity and differentiation of God's being. It considers the 'threefold mode of being'[56] which constitutes its differentiation in the unity of God's being. In that the doctrine of the Trinity does this, it explicates the statement 'God reveals Himself as the Lord'.[57] In precisely this way, the doctrine of the Trinity is the interpretation of the self-interpretation of God.

In accordance with the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity and the real theme of the biblical witness, Barth begins with the *event* of revelation, with 'God's action in His revelation'.[58] Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is already

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., p. 306. Schelling also regards the fact that God reveals himself as the Lord as the fundamental principle of the doctrine of the Trinity, when he thinks of 'the three persons' of the Trinity as the 'three Lords of times which follow each another'. In that Schelling understands the time before creation as 'in a special sense the time of the Father', the present time as 'in a preeminent sense the time of the Son' and the future time 'throughout creation' as 'the time of the Spirit', the immediate suspicion of Sabellianism does not apply to him, since he recommends that 'these three times', in contrast to 'that merely temporal time which originates namely through the merely constant reiteration of the one world-time = A', should be called *'eternal'* times. 'For with the oft-made statement that there is no time outside our world, or that time is a mere form of our sensuous existence, and the like, one can conceive nothing of the divine economy of three persons as it is presented in revelation, nor of revelation itself. These and similar weak concepts must be rejected, in order to penetrate the great mystery which has been opened up by Christianity' (*Philosophie der Offenbarung,* in *Sämtliche Werke* II.4 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1858), pp. 71f.

Schelling's interpretation of the three persons of the Trinity as 'three Lords of times which follow each other' (which, by the way, is grounded in an 'exegesis' of 1 Cor. 15.25) is concerned with an appropriation which exposes the inadequacy of the vulgar concept of time. That the appropriation does not exclude a *perichoresis* of the 'three successive Lords' is expressed in statements that it is a matter of 'the time of the Father' only 'in a special sense' and 'the time of the Son' only 'in a preeminent sense'. With respect to 'the time of the Spirit', a corresponding additional qualifier is lacking because 'the glory of the Spirit is added to that of the Father and of the Son' for the 'common glorification of the Father, the Son and the Spirit' (ibid., p. 73).

That Schelling's doctrine of the Trinity is fundamentally different from Barth's – despite (even in) the parallels which have been shown – will not remain hidden to anyone who does not fail to be occupied with reading the relevant statements in Schelling.

[58] *CD* I/1, p. 314.

christologically grounded – not only through the assertion that revelation is the root of the doctrine of the Trinity, but further and most especially through beginning with the event of God's manifestation within the three distinct moments in the concept of revelation. The christological grounding is oriented formally to the concept of God. In his revelation God takes form and reveals himself precisely as form. God's 'taking form' is 'His self-unveiling'.[59] We are to understand God's 'taking form' in the sense of the concept of God's repetition. For God's 'taking form' is to be understood in such a way that God 'is His own *alter ego* in His revelation'.[60] God's taking form is thus not an accidental characteristic of God 'but . . . an event'[61] and, indeed, an event which presupposes a self-distinction in God, 'something new in God, a self-distinction of God from Himself, a being of God in a mode of being . . . in which He can also exist for us'.[62] With this doctrine of the self-differentiating of God in his being, Barth is concerned to know that God's revelation is grounded in God's being *alone,* and to keep any idea of synergism far from the Christian concept of revelation. That God is for us, that he is not only hidden as himself for himself, but rather revealed for us even as he who is the hidden God for himself – all this must be grounded in the being of God. 'The God who reveals Himself here can reveal Himself. The very fact of revelation tells us that it is proper to him to distinguish Himself from Himself, i.e. to be God in Himself and in concealment, and yet at the same time to be God a second time in a very different way, namely, in manifestation, i.e. in the form of something He Himself is not':[63] God the Son. 'This Sonship is God's lordship in his revelation.'[64]

If we start from here, there can be no doubt that God in 'His first and hidden mode of being'[65] cannot be understood as a

[59] Ibid., p. 316.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., p. 320.
[65] Ibid., p. 316.

God who stands over against and apart from his revelation. The *deus absconditus* [hidden God] is not a God who is hostile to revelation. Rather, precisely as the *deus absconditus*, that is, in his hidden mode of being, God is the subject of revelation. The fact that this subject of revelation is the God who cannot be unveiled to man, sharpens and safeguards the concept of revelation as God's *self*-unveiling. In his self-unveiling God unveils himself as he who cannot be unveiled. 'In saying this we naturally mean that in His revealed nature he is thus inscrutable. It is the *Deus revelatus* who is the *Deus absconditus*.'[66] Thus revelation remains *God's* revelation. In this way, the *event* of revelation is protected from becoming an occurrence in which God loses himself. As event, revelation may only be thought of in so far as this event is constituted through God's being as subject. 'Revelation always means revealing'; for 'God's presence is always God's decision to be present'.[67] The God who *can* reveal himself is not *obliged* to reveal himself. 'God's self-unveiling remains an act of sovereign divine freedom.'[68] Therefore God as the subject of revelation *remains* distinguished from revelation. Were this not so, revelation would cease to be revelation. For it is not 'the form, but God in the form, that reveals, speaks, comforts, works and aids'.[69] But precisely in this way God reveals himself 'as the Father of the Son in whom He takes form for our sake' without thereby ceasing to be 'the free ground and the free power of His being God in the Son'.[70]

If revelation as event allows us to perceive 'God in a mode of being . . . in which He can also exist for us',[71] then it will be of the essence of revelation that this being for us also really reaches its final goal. Moreover, the fact that revelation is 'a concrete relation to concrete men'[72] must be grounded in the essence

[66] Ibid., p. 321.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., p. 324.
[71] Ibid., p. 316.
[72] Ibid., p. 325.

of the revelation itself if 'God's revelation has its reality and truth wholly and in every respect . . . within itself'.[73] Here also Barth is once again thorough-going in his resistance to a synergistic concept of revelation, as the fact that revelation is 'the self-unveiling' of God 'imparted to men'[74] is understood as grounded exclusively in revelation itself, and so as itself part of the content of revelation. As an event bestowed on humanity, revelation is an historical event.

'Part of the concept of the biblically attested revelation is that it is a historical event.'[75] With the concept of the 'historicity of revelation', Barth expresses the fact that revelation takes place factually, is ascertainable (though not historically in the sense of positivism!) and perceptible as an 'event which is different from every other event and which is thus incomparable and cannot be repeated'.[76] In this sense, 'in the Bible revelation is a matter of impartation, of God's being revealed'.[77] Only through God's being revealed historically do the two previously perceived 'relationships in which the Bible regards God as existing'[78] remain protected from being myths. 'Without God's being historically revealed in this way, revelation would not be revelation. God's being revealed makes it a link between God and man, an effective encounter between God and man. But it is God's own being revealed that makes it this.'[79] Here also it is a matter of the *being* of God, of a mode of being peculiar to himself. This moment of revelation, too, is itself grounded in the being of God. And this grounding of revelation in the being of the self-revealing God becomes clear through revelation itself. In the 'self-disclosing unity, disclosing itself to men, of the Father and the Son',[80] God *can* 'do what the biblical witnesses ascribe to Him, namely, not just take form and not just

[73] Ibid., p. 305.
[74] Ibid., p. 324.
[75] Ibid., p. 325.
[76] Ibid., p. 329.
[77] Ibid., p. 330.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., p. 331.
[80] Ibid., p. 322.

remain free in this form, but also in this form and freedom of his become God to specific men, eternity in a moment'.[81] This is meant when it is said that 'God reveals Himself as the Spirit'.[82]

God reveals himself as the Lord. That, for Barth, is the fundamental principle of revelation. We have seen what that means. If revelation is God's self-interpretation, then in revelation God interprets himself *as* the one who he *is*. Thus in the event of this self-interpretation he reveals himself as revealer, as revelation and as revealedness. But in these 'as-relations' God reveals himself at the same time as the one who *can* reveal himself, i.e., as the Lord. For Barth, the concept of God's lordship of God expresses the capacity for revelation and thus the possibility of revelation, grounded in God's being. This possibility of being able to reveal himself does not, however, exist apart from the 'as-relations' in which God 'repeats' himself. 'Where the actuality exists there is also the corresponding possibility':[83] this proposition, which underlies Barth's ontology, is true here also. If God is *able* to reveal himself, then he must reveal himself as the *Lord* in *all* as-relations. If he reveals himself as the one he is, if his interpretation of himself is therefore complete, then the *being* of God which becomes thematic in the as-relations of revelation must correspond to his function manifest in self-interpretation as revealer, revelation and revealedness.[84] Therefore the dogma of the Trinity is the appropriate expression for the being of God. It protects the Christian doctrine of God from becoming mythological[85] or slipping into metaphysics.[86]

[81] Ibid., p. 331.

[82] Ibid., p. 332.

[83] *CD* II/1, p. 5.

[84] In Barth's writings this works itself out in formal terms in that in the trinitarian paragraphs on Father, Son and Spirit, God is first treated in the 'revelatory function' as creator, reconciler and redeemer, and then in his mode of being as eternal Father, eternal Son and eternal Spirit.

[85] *CD* I/1, pp. 327ff.

[86] In the Greek tradition both are very close: cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A.982.b.18f.: ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφός πώς ἐστιν [even the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of wisdom].

It is precisely this critical and polemical function of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity that has not been considered adequately. Paradoxical though it may sound, Barth accorded to his doctrine of the Trinity (1932) the same function which the programme of demythologising performs in the theology of Rudolf Bultmann. Differences of methods and results here and there cannot obscure this. This state of affairs ought to give cause for reflection to rash and superficial critics of Bultmann, and to critics of Barth who are always ready and pleased to reproach the *Church Dogmatics* with the charge of speculation[87] even though they themselves are less ready and pleased to read Barth's writings. If we understand Bultmann's programme as the concern for appropriate speech about God (and so about humanity), and if we see this concern fulfilled in not objectifying God or letting him be objectified as an It or He, but in bringing him to speech as Thou, and so speaking of him appropriately, then we shall not overlook a striking parallel to the significance which Barth attributes (and gives) to the doctrine of the Trinity. For the significance – not the final significance, but certainly a primary one – of the doctrine of the Trinity consists for Barth in ensuring that, over against subordinationism on the one hand and modalism on the other, God 'does not become an It or He, but remains Thou'.[88] While subordinationism has its basis in the intention of making the God who reveals himself into 'the kind of subject . . . [which] we can survey, grasp and master, which can be objectified',[89] the task of the doctrine of the

[87] The accusation of speculation against thorough-going dogmaticians is an old one. Bernard of Clairvaux's complaint against Abelard is instructive: 'This man disputes about the faith against the faith; he sees nothing as mysterious and as in a mirror darkly, but sees everything face to face. He wants to go beyond his limitations. He asserts that of everything in heaven and on earth, nothing is unknown to him except himself. He pushes back the limits accepted by our fathers, by giving voice to the most lofty questions about revelation. To his pupils, completely inexperienced, hardly educated, hardly weaned from dialectic, he opens up the mystery of the Trinity, the holiest of holies, the inner chamber of the King' (from M. Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode* II [Freiburg: Herder, 1956], pp. 171f.).

[88] *CD* I/1, p. 381.

[89] Ibid.

Trinity, according to Barth, is precisely to comprehend the subject of revelation as *the* subject who remains 'indissolubly subject in His revelation'.[90] And while modalism looks for the real God beyond the three moments of revelation in a higher being without distinctions, allowing the Thou of God to fall from view and an 'objectifying'[91] of God to appear in its place, the task of the doctrine of the Trinity is to prevent the 'revelation of God and therefore His being' from becoming 'an economy which is foreign to His essence'.[92] Accordingly, the positive purpose of the doctrine of the Trinity, a purpose which it is the doctrine's task to defend 'on the polemical front', is to make clear that, and in what way, the God who reveals himself can be (*a*) 'our *God*' and (*b*) '*our* God'.[93] He can be (*a*) 'our God because in all His modes of being He is equal to Himself, one and the same Lord'. And as this Lord he can be (*b*) 'our God . . . He can meet us and unite Himself to us, because He is God in His three modes of being as Father, Son and Spirit, because creation, reconciliation and redemption, the whole being, speech and action in which He wills to be our God, have their basis and prototype in His own essence, in His own being as God.'[94]

The 'whole being, speech and action' in which God wills to be *our* God is, for Barth, what we call revelation. 'According to the Bible God's being with us is the event of revelation.'[95] It was considered true that this revelation has 'its reality and truth wholly and in every respect . . . within itself'.[96] When it is now said that this revelation of God has its 'basis and prototype in His own essence, in His own being as God',[97] then this basis and prototype in the essence and being of God himself must

[90] Ibid., p. 382.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid., p. 383.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., p. 307.
[96] Ibid., p. 305.
[97] Ibid., pp. 383f.

also belong to its reality and truth. That means, however, that God's being *ad extra corresponds* essentially to his being *ad intra* in which it has its basis and prototype. God's *self*-interpretation (revelation) is interpretation as correspondence. Note: *as interpreter* of himself, God corresponds to his own being. But because God as his own interpreter (even in his external works) *is* himself, and since in this event as such we are also dealing with the *being* of God, then the highest and final statement which can be made about the being of God is: God corresponds to himself.[98]

Barth's *Dogmatics* is in reality basically a thorough exegesis of this statement. Once it is not understood as an attempt to objectify God, but as an attempt to grasp the mystery of God where it is revealed as mystery, then this statement implies a *movement* which, over and above brilliance and diligence, makes possible a dogmatics of the stature of the *Church Dogmatics*. The *Dogmatics* is a brilliant and diligent attempt to reconstruct in thought the movement of the statement 'God corresponds to himself'.

Before we proceed to Barth's doctrine of God proper on the basis of this principle for interpreting God's being, we have still to show the consequences of this statement for the doctrine of the Trinity. We may begin by saying that the doctrine of the Trinity concerns the being of the God who reveals himself, in the sense of God's capacity to be. And so the doctrine of the Trinity tells us 'that the God who reveals himself according to Scripture is both to be feared and also to be loved, to be feared because He can be God and to be loved because He can be our God. That He *is* these two things the doctrine of the Trinity as such cannot tell us'.[99] Here the doctrine of the Trinity points back to Scripture and to the revelation of God himself, which is witnessed in Scripture, and of which the doctrine of the Trinity

[98] Cf. *CD* II/1, pp. 657, 660: there, the 'form of the perfect being of God' is defined as the 'wonderful . . . unity of identity and non-identity, simplicity and multiplicity, inward and outward'.

[99] *CD* I/1, p. 383.

seeks to be the interpretation. The doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, does not replace revelation, since no statement can replace the event of the Word of God itself. 'No dogma and no theology as such' can do that.[100] The doctrine of the Trinity is not simply a human construction; if it were, it would lead to absurdity, for it would then cease to be the interpretation of an event. Rather, according to Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity should prevent us from understanding the being of God as a human construction. In teaching us that God as 'Father, Son and Spirit . . . is, so to speak, ours in advance',[101] it calls attention to the fact that, as the God who is already ours in advance, God is completely his own, the one who 'posits Himself and is His own origin in the hiddenness of his Godhead'.[102]

(c) The self-relatedness of God's being (in the distinction of the three modes of God's being)

That God corresponds to himself is a statement of a relation. The statement means that God's being is a relationally structured being. The relational structuring of the being of God was shown in the phenomenon of revelation, which as such is also relationally structured, and precisely in this relational structuring expresses the relational structure of God's being. The concept of structure is certainly open to misunderstanding in that it can be understood in the sense of immovability. The relations within God's being brought to expression by revelation, however, are a matter of 'genetic relations'[103] through which God's being is differentiated into different modes of being.

With the concept 'mode of being', Barth takes up the patristic term 'mode of subsistence' (τρόπος ὑπάρξεως) to replace the misleading concept of 'person'. The unified being of God is differentiated in that it distinguishes itself in three different

[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., p. 372.
[103] Ibid., p. 363.

modes of being. The distinction between these three modes of being is to be understood out of the relations which prevail between them. These particular characteristics of the modes of God's being which are given to one another through their mutual relations make the modes of God's being into '*modes* of being'.[104] One can only read the 'trinity in unity' of God's being out of the concept of revelation as modes of being distinguished from one another through their mutual relation and *formally* marked out by their particular characteristics. Only in the sense of an *analogia relationis* [analogy of relation] and *attributionis extrinsecae* [extrinsic attribution] do the modes of God's being in the economic-trinitarian reality of revelation correspond to his immanent-trinitarian capacity for revelation. According to Barth there is no possibility of 'deriving the difference in the three modes of being from the material differences in the thought of God contained in the concept of revelation'.[105] An *analogia attributionis intrinsecae* [analogy of intrinsic attribution], according to which the modes of God's being repeat their substantial content in revelation, does not come into question. For the 'relatively distinct revelation of the three modes of being does not imply a corresponding distinction within themselves'.[106] The oneness of God's being must be shown precisely in the differentiation of the three modes of being among themselves.[107] The critical rule for the relation between the differentiation of the modes of being and their 'unity in this distinction'[108] is 'the theological rule with respect to the Trinity: *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* [the external works of the Trinity are indivisible]'.[109]

Disregarding this rule and asserting a material analogy between the relatively differentiated 'becoming revealed' of the

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., p. 362.

[107] It is from this point that Barth's teaching about 'God's passion' (especially as concerns the threat of tritheism) is carefully to be defended.

[108] *CD* I/1, p. 362.

[109] Ibid., pp. 362, 375.

three modes of God's being and their differentiation in themselves would, in the last analysis, mean that the becoming revealed of the being of God is *impossible.* However certain it is that revelation as God's self-interpretation is also God's self-identification, it is equally certain that, apart from the *event* of self-identification, there is no *identity* between the being of God and a being understood (but then only incorrectly) as revelation,[110] a being in which the *alius, alius, alius* of the Trinity would be perverted into an *aliud, aliud, aliud.* However, if revelation is understood as the *event* of God's self-identification, then, with the unity of the distinctions between revealer, revelation and being revealed which constitute this event, revelation enables that very analogy of relation which allows us to distinguish the being of God into three modes of being in the sense of different genetic relations to one another. Just as revelation is to be differentiated into (*a*) a whence of revelation, (*b*) a becoming revealed of God which is grounded in this whence, and (*c*) a being revealed of God which is grounded in the whence *and* in the becoming revealed, so 'in the essence or act in which God is God there is first a pure origin and then two different issues' to be differentiated, 'the first of which is to be attributed solely to the origin and the second and different one to both the origin and also the first issue ... God is ... God in the very mode or way that He is in those relations to Himself'.[111]

The being of God is thus a being which is differentiated in itself and so related in its differentiations, so that the relation constitutes the distinction. But that means that these very relations are not impersonal structural elements in God, but that God's being as being is pure *event.* It is a matter of a 'repetition in God', a '*repetitio aeternitatis in aeternitate* [repetition of eternity in eternity], by which the unity of the revealed God is differentiated from everything else that may be called unity'.[112]

[110] Ibid., p. 326.
[111] Ibid., p. 364.
[112] Ibid., p. 366.

Therefore this being is to be grounded in nothing beyond itself, and, indeed, without thereby seeking to claim for itself the metaphysical title of a *summun ens* [highest being]. Conferring this title would, in fact, rob the divine being as event of its self-grounded priority, because it would be able to conceive of God *only* as an elevation of being as we experience it. Conferring such a title would be failing to understand that '*alius–alius–alius* . . . does not signify an *aliud–aliud–aliud*', that the ontological harmony of unity and differentiation in God's being knows 'no analogies' because this ontological harmony is 'the unique divine trinity in the unique divine unity'.[113] The singularity of this being of God as event would then already be given up if within the possible relations between the three modes of God's being one sought to postulate a 'fourth logically possible and actual relation, the active relation of the Father and the Son to the Spirit', apart from the being of the Father ('in virtue of which God the Father is the Father of the Son'), the being of the Son ('in virtue of which God the Son is the Son of the Father') and the being of the Spirit ('in virtue of which God the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son').[114] In its singularity being as event is only to be conceived as 'three-hood' [*Gedritt*][115] not as fourhood [*Geviert*].[116] In 'fourhood' the philosopher seeks to think of being as event, but has then deliberately renounced thinking through the singularity of God. This renunciation deserves theological respect in so far as it has fundamentally taken its leave of the attempt to confer titles on God (an attempt, perhaps, to protect God's singularity in that it is not thought but does not remain unconsidered?). A singular *revelation* – or, better, revelation in its singularity – can also certainly no longer be thought. On the contrary: revelation

[113] Ibid., p. 364.

[114] Ibid., p. 365.

[115] Cf. M. Luther, *Werke. Weimare Ausgabe*, vol. 46, p. 436 and vol. 49, pp. 238f.

[116] Cf. M. Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). The rejection of a divine fourhood was explicitly pronounced by the Fourth Lateran Council: '*in Deo solummodo Trinitas est, non quaternitas*' [there is in God only a trinity, not a quaternity].

becomes a fundamental determinant of all that exists in so far as it shows itself originally as itself. Over against this, we must remind ourselves that God is, so to speak, 'ours in advance' precisely 'in His three modes of being as Father, Son and Spirit'.[117] If in his being as threehood God is already ours in advance, then in the freedom of his being as event this singular being is *love.* But the being of God is singular love precisely as threehood. The self-giving in which God is already ours *in advance* is the self-giving in which *he* belongs *to himself.* This self-giving is the self-relatedness of God's being within the differentiated modes of being of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. In the self-relatedness of God's being the relational structuring of this being *occurs.*[118] As the mutual self-giving of the three modes of God's being, God's being is event. Because God's being as threehood is self-giving (love), this being may not be conceived as something abstract. When this happens, it is not conceived as God's being. For 'being is actually something abstract only where it is abstracted from love'.[119] The self-relatedness of God's being means that God is not beyond himself. That is what distinguishes him from humanity. For humanity's self-relation as *homo in se incurvatus* [humanity

[117] *CD* I/1, p. 383.

[118] What Gollwitzer rejects concerning the relation between the being of God and humanity when he rejects the statement that God's being is 'only the event of this relation' (*The Existence of God*, p. 50) is, according to Barth, true precisely for the being of God in his self-relatedness. The being of God *occurs* in the mutual relations of the modes of God's being and actually happens in this event. But if in his being as threehood God is already ours in advance, then the reservations of Bultmann and his pupils against that objectification of God must in fact find a great deal of appreciation, which I am unable to discover in the book cited by Gollwitzer (ibid., p. 50 n. 1), G. Noller, *Sein und Existenz* (Munich: Kaiser, 1962). Why then are the most questionable interpretations of Bultmann preferred to an interpretation of Bultmann in good part? It is beyond question that Gollwitzer makes an effort to interpret Bultmann in good part, something which should be acknowledged with satisfaction. It is, nevertheless, misleading to state all the potentially dangerous consequences of Bultmann's theology and simply to repeat what Noller advances against Bultmann, instead of advancing what Bultmann says and intends against an interpretation as questionable as that of Noller. For a critique of Noller, see *Evangelische Theologie* 23 (1963), pp. 218f.

[119] T. Bonhoeffer, *Die Gotteslehre des Thomas von Aquin*, p. 41.

turned in on itself] means that humanity is beyond itself (Rom. 1.18f.).

(d) The concreteness of God's being: perichoresis and appropriation of the three modes of God's being

We have maintained that, as a dogmatic interpretation of God's self-interpretation, Barth's doctrine of the Trinity has anti-metaphysical and anti-mythological significance. It has this significance in that it teaches us to think of God's being as event, and so enables us to think of God as the one who reveals himself. Barth's doctrine of the Trinity tries to think of the being of God as event, in that it conceives the being of God as being distinguished or differentiated within itself. This, on the other hand, happens in that the different modes of God's being *in* which and *as* which God is God, are differentiated. The three modes of God's being as Father, Son and Spirit are to be thought of as differentiated from one another in the same measure that they are to be thought of as related to each other.[120] The mutual relations of the three divine modes of being are to be thought of as the self-relatedness of the divine being. In this self-relatedness, the being of God is understood as *event.* The self-relatedness of God's being makes possible God's self-interpretation. God *reveals* himself *as* Father, Son and Spirit because he *is* God *as* Father, Son and Spirit. As the mutual

[120] Feuerbach perceived this very acutely: 'The divine persons are distinguished from each other only by that which constitutes their relation to one another.' Feuerbach, however, draws from this the conclusion that in the dogma of the Trinity God's being is conceived not as concrete being but as completely abstract being, because 'the idea of the person is here only a relative idea, the idea of a relation'. Certainly there is a confusion of personality and person when Feuerbach maintains with respect to the being of the divine 'persons' – in supposed distinction from human being – that 'the abstract fatherhood alone constitutes his personality, his distinction from the Son, whose personality likewise is founded only on the abstract Sonship' (L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* [New York: Harper & Row, 1957], pp. 234f.). Barth brought out the true value of the trinitarian dogma with exactly the opposite conclusions, and doubtless with more originality or, let us say, biblically, when he understood the dogma as the attempt to conceive of God's being concretely.

self-giving of the divine modes of being, the self-relatedness of God's being is the enabling and thus the anticipatory form of that self-giving of God in which he is ours. If we are enabled to think of this self-giving of God in which he is ours as concrete event, then we must also think of the being of God in the event of its self-relatedness as *concrete* being. For the assertion that in its self-relatedness God's being is to be thought of as event would remain empty if the extent to which God's being is concrete event were unclear. And so it must be made clear to what extent the unity of the three modes of God's being is a *concrete* unity and to what extent the differentiation of the three modes of being remains a *concrete* differentiation precisely in this concrete unity. Thinking which is concerned for such clarity must necessarily become more difficult and 'abstract' in order to be able to think of the concreteness of God's being. That may be vexing; but it ought to counsel a certain moderation to those theologians who consider that the problems raised by Herbert Braun, for example, can be settled easily by assuring everyone as frequently and clamorously as possible that God is concrete, objective, something over against us, etc. (The merit of Gollwitzer in his book on 'the existence of God' is that he has drawn our attention to the difficulty of the problem under consideration.) As obvious as it may seem that God's being in its self-relatedness is to be conceived as *concrete* being, overcoming this conceptual problem remains extremely difficult.[121]

In Barth's doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrines of *perichoresis* and appropriation serve to overcome this difficulty. With the help of these doctrines, the concreteness of God's being will be thought. After what has already been said, we do not need to emphasise any further that in this task of thinking it is not a matter of the postulates of thought. On the contrary, it is a

[121] 'Did not one of the most famous theologians at the beginning of the last century [i.e., the eighteenth century], Christoph Matthäus Pfaff, who lacked neither learning nor the endeavour to be orthodox, make the frank admission that in the doctrine of the Trinity he could well understand each moment taken separately, but that it was impossible for him to fit together in his head the whole with all moments and definitions' (Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, pp. 66f.).

matter of grappling with the systematic problems which theology has been set by the revelation which has taken place.

For Barth, in God's being revealed the being of God is concrete as historical event. In this concreteness the self-communication of God takes place. In God's self-communication there occurs his fellowship with humanity. But in this self-communication of God to humanity *all* three divine modes of being are at work, in accordance with the rule of trinitarian theology *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* [the external works of the Trinity are indivisible]. If the concreteness of God's self-communication to humanity is to be thought thoroughly, then the self-relatedness of God's being in the differentiation of the three modes of being must similarly be thought as fellowship in which the being of God takes place. This fellowship is given through 'a definite participation of each mode of being in the other modes of being'.[122] Through this mutual participation, the three modes of being *become* concretely united to one another. In this concrete unity they *are* God. Here becoming and being are fundamentally together, because the concrete[123] unity of God's being is 'the unity of being one which is always also a becoming one'.[124] None of the divine modes of being, then, exists in abstraction from the others. Even the mutual *relatedness* of the modes of being is no abstract

[122] *CD* I/1, p. 370.

[123] According to Hegel, 'concrete' is derived from *concrescere* [to grow together]; there could be no better designation for this subject-matter. In his own way, Hegel sought to think of God as concrete being. Cf., for example, his *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art,* trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 70f.: 'If we say, for example, of God that he is simply *one,* the supreme being as such, we have thereby only enunciated a dead abstraction of the sub-rational Understanding. Such a God, not apprehended himself in his concrete truth, will provide no content for art, especially not for visual art. Therefore the Jews and the Turks have not been able by art to represent their God, who does not even amount to such an abstraction of the Understanding, in the positive way that Christians have. For in Christianity God is set forth in his truth, and therefore as thoroughly concrete in himself, as person, as subject, and, more closely defined, as spirit. What he is as spirit is made explicit for religious apprehension as a Trinity of Persons, which yet at the same time is self-aware as *one.* Here we have essentiality or universality, and particularisation, together with their reconciled unity, and only such unity is the concrete.'

[124] *CD* I/1, p. 369.

structuring of the being of God. Rather, the mutual relatedness of the modes of being *occurs* as participation in each other, as *circumincessio,*[125] as περιχώρησις. In this participation it is a matter of 'passing into one another', through which one mode of being trespassing against another is rendered impossible.[126] Rather, the *perichoresis* works in such a way 'that the divine modes of being mutually condition and permeate one another so completely that one is always in the other two and the other two in the one'.[127] The doctrine of *perichoresis* conceives the concrete unity of God's being in that it thinks of the modes of the being of God as encountering one another in unrestricted participation.

Over against the possible objection that such theological statements about an event which is not directly related to humanity encourage a metaphysics which, in Platonic fashion, divides reality into two 'worlds', in one of which God exists 'for himself', and in the other of which God exists 'for us', we should reflect that in all his trinitarian theological statements Barth is concerned with the unity of the reality of *God.* 'God's essence and work are not twofold but one.'[128] Yet Barth makes a sharp distinction between the reality of God and the reality which owes its existence to God's work. But because for Barth God's work and essence are not two different kinds of thing, it is impossible for him that the reality of God and the reality which owes its existence to God should relate to each other as two different ontological strata or that they should fall apart as two worlds separated by a χωρισμός [division]. If one wished to let the reality of God 'be tacked on that of the world' as 'an additional reality',[129] then all talk of God could only be supplementary and therefore superfluous. And it would then be timely

[125] Because the relatedness of the modes of being *occurs* as participation in one another, the other term which is used in Latin to designate this subject-matter, *circuminsessio,* is less recommended.

[126] Cf. *CD* I/1, p. 370.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid., p. 371.

[129] G. Ebeling, 'Theological Reflections on Conscience', in *Word and Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 410.

to remember Schleiermacher's criticism: '[T]hose who make a distinction between this world and the world beyond delude themselves.'[130]

The reality of God of which Barth speaks is certainly falsely understood when as 'that world' it is set over against another world, namely, 'this world'. It is something different to think of God as God. When Barth speaks of a 'reality of God', he means nothing other than this. God as God is, however, God in his essence and work. 'The work of God is the essence of God as the essence of Him who . . . is revealer, revelation and

[130] F. Schleiermacher, *On Religion. Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 16. Barth took very careful account of the significance of this statement of Schleiermacher's in his doctrine of the *eternal* election of the *man* Jesus. The decisive thing, of course, is where the 'distinction between this world and the world beyond' comes from. On this there also rests the decision as to whether God appears *on* the horizon of the world or whether the world has its place *in* the horizon of God.

In citing this statement from Schleiermacher as a critical reminder, we delineate a boundary between ourselves and Gollwitzer, who objects to Ebeling's 'rejection of the idea of God "distinct from the world"': 'Whoever . . . only indulges in polemic in the same direction as Schleiermacher, without also distinguishing himself from him, is omitting something which is indispensable in a post-Schleiermacher age: the positive definition of the true, irresolvable and fundamental difference, beyondness and hence objectivity of the God of the Christian proclamation as compared with man and the world' (*The Existence of God*, p. 177). Ebeling's concern that we do not think of God as an extramundane being who can then still be thought of in a worldly manner as tacked on to this world is, indeed, in its way, the attempt to think of God's being as concrete being. That he is concerned (as a pupil of Luther) precisely with the correct distinction between God and humanity, and thus between God and the world, is something which he has always emphasised. Cf., for example, 'The Necessity of the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms', in *Word and Faith*, p. 403, which speaks of the one 'who truly stands *coram Deo* [before God]' and therefore 'truly *coram mundo* [before the world]. For he knows how to distinguish between what he has to expect from God and what he has to expect from the world; between what he has to thank God for and what he has to thank the world for; between what he owes to God and what he owes to the world. He knows how to distinguish between God and world.' And Ebeling's assertion that the 'decisive differentiation' is summed up 'solely by the alternative of a believing or unbelieving relation to reality' ('Theology and Reality', in *Word and Faith*, p. 200) can in no way be misunderstood in a subjective way, somehow in the sense that God's being is 'dissolved' into the subjectivity of faith (a favourite word in the polemic against thinking theologians), when one considers that Ebeling has defined the essence of faith as 'participation in the essence of God' ('Jesus and Faith', in *Word and Faith*, p. 242).

being revealed, or Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer.'[131] Barth certainly distinguishes God's 'essence as the One who works and reveals Himself' from the 'essence of God as such'.[132] But this distinction has no other purpose than to establish the fact that God reveals himself 'not constrained by His essence' but 'in a free decision grounded in His essence'.[133] And correspondingly, the assertion that 'God's work is His essence in its relation to the reality which is distinct from Him and which is to be created or is created'[134] has the purpose of asserting the concrete unity of God's being as the one who reveals himself and as the one who is capable of revelation. God's capacity to reveal himself (or the essence of God as such, or the being of God in himself) is, however, not to be understood as another world which humanity could discover outside our own. Rather, it is a matter of the attempt to express God's being appropriately and, indeed, in such a way that God's being revealed, on the basis of which there is any speech about God's being at all, is really conceived as *God's* being revealed. In order to be able to speak appropriately of God's work, we must talk about the essence of the one who works. But the essence of this one who works is now thought strictly from the point of view of revelation, and so not as substance, but as the 'unity of Father, Son and Spirit among themselves' to which 'their unity *ad extra*' corresponds.[135] The meaning of the doctrine of *perichoresis* is this unity of the modes of God's being among themselves as the concreteness of the being of God. It is the attempt at responsible speech about God.

At the same time, however, the concreteness of the being of God must be thought of in a counter-movement, not in order to make revelation superfluous, but to be instructed by it. This counter-movement makes the corresponding relation between the *internal* unity of these modes of God's being and their

[131] *CD* I/1, p. 371.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.

external unity intelligible out of the mutual relation of the three modes of God's being. It is thus a matter of the *grounding* of the axiom of trinitarian theology *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*. Such a grounding faces the difficulty of being able to understand God's being only from his works as revealer, revelation and being revealed, and thus in the differentiation of the three modes of God's being as it becomes explicit in the differentiation of the works of creation, reconciliation and redemption. At the same, however, the unity of the modes of God's being must become intelligible in their work; otherwise 'we should be plunged at once into the error of tritheism'.[136] We may sum up the difficulty which arises here with the question: How is the unity of the divine modes of being able to express itself in God's *work* without surrendering its differentiation? It is thus a matter of the oneness of unity and differentiation in the divine modes of being in the work of God.

'In the vocabulary of older dogmatics'[137] this problem was considered under the name of the doctrine of appropriation. Appropriation (attribution, assignment) is the process which especially attributes particular logical predicates to each of the three modes of God's being. Barth quotes approvingly the definition given by Aquinas:[138] *appropriare nihil est aliud commune trahere ad proprium* [to appropriate is nothing other than to assign to one person what is common to all], and in such a way that what is common, which has greater similarity to that which is proper to one person than to that which is proper to another, is in each case appropriated to this one person [*maiorem habet similitudinem ad id quod est proprium personae unius quam cum proprio alterius*]. By appropriation 'this act or this attribute must now be given prominence in relation to this or that mode of being in order that this can be described as such'.[139] Appropriation is thus a hermeneutical process for defining

[136] Ibid., p. 373.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid., quoting Aquinas, *De veritate* q. 7, art. 3.
[139] *CD* I/1, p. 375.

the being of God, through which particular attributes and operations of the Trinity (in the unity of its modes of being) are ascribed to one particular mode of being. However, appropriation *in no way* excludes the attributes and acts ascribed to one particular mode of being from the other modes of being. For appropriation ought never to go along with 'the forgetting or denying of God's presence in all His modes of being, in His total being and act'.[140] 'The very knowledge of the intratrinitarian particularity . . . is thus a guarantee of the unity of God.'[141] The unity of the three modes of being has thus to demonstrate itself precisely as *concrete* unity in that *per appropriationem* [by appropriation] each of the three modes of being is articulated as itself. Differently formulated: the *unity* of the three modes of God's being proves itself as concrete unity when it preserves the differentiation of the three modes of being as *concrete* differentiation. As this takes place, the concrete unity articulates itself in oneness with the concrete differentiation of the modes of God's being, to form *harmony as the concreteness* of God's being. Thus harmony grounds the fact that, in the unity and differentiation of his modes of being, God not only *is* but also *expresses himself*: 'to the involution and convolution of the three modes of being in the essence of God there corresponds exactly their involution and convolution in His work'.[142]

We called appropriation a hermeneutical process. It is this in so far as it happens *per appropriationem* that a mode of God's being 'can be described as such'.[143] Appropriation is thus the possibility of bringing God to speech, for example, as Father. We also have appropriation 'before us when in Luther's Catechism the concept of Father and creation, Son and redemption and Holy Ghost and sanctification are brought into the well-known close relation to one another'.[144] For Barth, the

[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid., p. 395.
[142] Ibid., p. 374.
[143] Ibid., p. 375.
[144] Ibid., p. 373.

doctrine of appropriation is a matter of knowledge of the 'analogies' to the divine modes of being which are 'set up in the world by revelation'.[145] Both the theological tradition and Barth seem to have understood appropriation as a hermeneutical process in the sense that it concerns an act of description by the theologian of the trinitarian persons. The theologian appropriates. In Barth, however, the use of language fluctuates. 'Augustine . . . appropriated';[146] but Bonaventure 'has a wealth of appropriations which he . . . partly indicated himself'.[147] What is indicated are already completed appropriations. But who then appropriated?

Barth formulates the following decisive rule for Protestant dogmatics concerning the doctrine of appropriation: 'Appropriations must not be invented freely. They are authentic when they are taken literally or materially or both from Holy Scripture, when they are a rendering or interpretation of the appropriations found there.'[148] As a hermeneutical process undertaken by the theologian, appropriation is thus a follow-up to the act of appropriation which has already been undertaken in Scripture. And since Scripture testifies to revelation, we must understand revelation itself as the hermeneutical process in which appropriations have their *ratio cognoscendi* [epistemological ground]. In this sense, Barth speaks of analogies 'set up in the world by revelation'.[149] But, since for Barth revelation

[145] Ibid., p. 372. As analogies set up a revelation, they are to be sharply distinguished from the *vestigia trinitatis* which are supposed to be 'present in the world'.

[146] Ibid., p. 373. Barth says that this appropriation is 'not just permitted; it is also commanded', but it remains '"only" an appropriation'. Nevertheless, it 'corresponds to the reality of the revelation attested to us in Scripture', and certainly 'the impropriety of the knowledge based on the appropriation corresponds to the reality of the faith which apprehends the revelation, which is not sight' (ibid., pp. 395f.). Here appropriation is without doubt a hermeneutical process of signification (whose subject is the human person).

[147] Ibid. For the anthropological relevance of the trinitarian appropriations in scholastic theology, we may refer to the excursus on 'elements of the medieval doctrine of the *imago dei*' in the very instructive book by R. Schwarz, *Fides, Spes et Caritas beim jungen Luther* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1962), pp. 414ff.

[148] *CD* I/1, p. 374.

[149] Ibid., p. 372.

is God's self-interpretation, appropriations have their *ratio essendi* [ontological ground] in the fellowship which expresses the differentiation of the divine modes of being themselves. Attribution is that process in which, in the concrete harmony of his modes of being, God assigns to himself his being *as Father, as Son* and *as Spirit.* Appropriation is attribution in so far as God assigns to himself his being as the triune God. In this way God corresponds to himself. Appropriation may therefore not be understood as an additional, supplementary event which is added to the distinction between the relations of origin in God. Appropriation is a supplementary process only in so far as the theologian *per appropriationem* undertakes to describe the individual modes of being of God as such. But this process of description must correspond to precisely that event which expresses the distinction of the relations of origin in the differentiation of the modes of God's being, in that God assigns to himself his being *as* Father, *as* Son and *as* Spirit.

We can now formulate: God *is* concrete in the harmony of his modes of being as the one who brings to speech, as the one who he chooses to be. More briefly: God is concrete in that he assigns to himself his being *as* Father, *as* Son and *as* Spirit, and so corresponds to himself. In this concreteness of God's being is the ground of the fact that God can reveal himself and that in revelation there is an exact correspondence between the involution and convolution of the three modes of being in the *work* of God and 'the involution and convolution of the three modes of being in the essence of God'.[150] For in revelation as self-interpretation, God brings himself to speech as the one (as object) who (as subject) in the concrete unanimity of his being has brought himself to correspondence (in that he assigned his own being to himself). The over-drawn terminological distinction between object and subject means that, when in revelation God brings himself to speech as *the one* who he is, this process is self-interpretation, and so must be distinguished

[150] Ibid., p. 374.

from the event in which God assigns to himself his being as . . . But in that God assigns to himself his being as Father, as Son and as Spirit, he corresponds to himself as the one who he concretely is.[151]

[151] On the basis of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity, Rahner's critical statement that 'among theologians since Augustine (contrary to the tradition preceding him) it has been more or less agreed that each of the divine persons (if it were only freely willed by God) could become man and that the incarnation of the second person in particular throws no light on the special character of *this* person within the divine nature' (K. Rahner, 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise "De Trinitate"', in *Theological Investigations* IV [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966], p. 80) may be regarded as basically obsolete. Rahner acknowledges the strange fact that, while every doctrine of the Trinity must stress the *differentiation* of the three hypostases in God, the concept of the hypostasis in Christology is then employed 'as if it is obvious that a *functio hypostatica* [hypostatic function] with respect to human nature could be exercised just as well by another hypostasis of the Trinity' (ibid., p. 80 n. 6), and that the distinction of the modes of being in God is not formulated *concretely*. The decisiveness with which Barth confronted this danger ought to have become clear. Rahner further objects 'that the revelatory communication of the mystery of the Trinity' is understood, correspondingly, only in 'the mode of a purely verbal communication, which does not change the real relationship between the giver (as Triune) and the hearer' (ibid., p. 82 n. 10). Rahner thus recognises clearly the defect in the form of the doctrine of the Trinity to which he objects as a thoroughly hermeneutical defect: 'The Trinity is not merely a reality to be expressed in purely doctrinal terms: it takes place in us, and as such does not first reach us in the form of statements communicated by revelation. On the contrary these statements have been made to us because the reality of which they speak has been accorded to *us*' (ibid., p. 98). And so, according to Rahner, an 'ontologically real relationship between man and each of the three divine Persons, a relationship which is not mere appropriation' (ibid., p. 82) may not be denied. Barth's understanding of revelation as God's interpretation of himself may have done justice to this requirement in an exemplary way. At any rate, one will not be able adequately to overcome the problems sketched by Rahner as long as one allows the 'ontologically real relationships' between the three modes of being and humanity to be more than 'mere appropriations'. For one has then understood the act of appropriation just as a mere process of signification which does not belong to revelation. Indeed, one must confront the defect to which Rahner objects – that the divine hypostases would be thought only abstractly in their differentiation – precisely by thinking of the hypostases of God as concrete modes of being determined by God himself through appropriation, in which the act of appropriation would be understood as a decisive 'act of divine life in the Spirit', as God's 'being-in-act' (in the word-act), or, more precisely, as the act which co-constitutes the divine life of the Spirit, as the word-act of God which concretely articulates God's being-in-act. Without such an understanding of appropriation, Barth's doctrine of the *eternal obedience* of the triune God is scarcely thinkable. Whether the appropriating in a particular way is fitting for God the Father would have to be examined.

These reflections should have made clear that in the doctrine of the Trinity Barth is concerned to prevent the opposition between a *deus nudus* [naked God] and a *deus incarnatus* [incarnate God]. For the dogma of the Trinity 'will not lead us beyond revelation and faith, but into revelation and faith, to their correct understanding'.[152]

It may be shown how precisely the doctrine of appropriation, and thus the understanding of the being of God as concrete event, fundamentally determine Barth's whole *Dogmatics*, and in particular his doctrine of election and later his doctrine of reconciliation.

[152] *CD* I/1, p. 396. The doctrine of the Trinity thus communicates not so much concepts about revelation as an attitude towards it. 'Attitude' is not to be understood merely 'subjectively', but signifies a 'being with' the matter, while concepts can simply block such a 'being with' in so far as the one who conceives is trapped within the horizon of his or her concepts. Concepts as such are anything but a guarantee of objectivity; in act, they are more the objectified form of subjectivism. (In his polemic against the ontological priority which Fuchs gives to attitude, Gollwitzer has misunderstood him [cf. *The Existence of God*, p. 110]; in his most recent work *Gottes Offenbarung und unsere Vorstellung von Gott* [Munich: Kaiser, 1964], however, he employs in an exemplary way the distinction which Fuchs makes and thereby overcomes the misunderstanding.) The necessity of concepts is not thereby called into question. A little more is said of this elsewhere.

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II

GOD'S BEING-AS-OBJECT

When we speak in the following pages of God's 'being-as-object', it ought to be clear from what has already been said that, for Barth, such language is certainly not to be understood as an objectifying of the being of God, in the sense that the knowing human subject could itself make God available as an object which may be, or has been, known. Averting this misunderstanding was indeed an essential function of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity had to establish the fact that, as the subject of his being, God is also the subject of his being known and becoming known. This is why the doctrine of the Trinity stands at the beginning of Barth's *Dogmatics* and therefore also at the beginning of the doctrine of God proper.

It would not, however, be possible to speak of *knowledge* of God if the knowing God is not really *known* and not the subject of the knowledge of God. In so far as the knowing human person is the *subject* of knowledge of God, God must be spoken of as the *object* of this knowledge. In this sense, talk about God's 'being-as-object' is indispensable. But how far *is* the human knower the subject, and how far is God the object, of knowledge of God? How far is talk of God's 'being-as-object' (or of his 'objectivity', as Barth usually puts it) *theologically* legitimate and necessary and not just a general epistemological postulate? The answer which Barth gives to this question makes it clear that the problem of the knowledge of God and of God's objectivity 'is itself already a part of [the doctrine of God] because it can consist only in a representation of the being and activity of God'.[1] And so in

[1] *CD* II/1, p. 32.

asking about the *being* of God, we will have to devote ourselves to the problem of God's being-as-object in the knowledge of God.

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that in no way does Barth speak of the objectivity of God 'to commend some sort of realism or objectivism'.[2] Nor is it at all the case that the ground of Barth's talk of God's objectivity is classical[3] with its distinction between the epistemological subject and the epistemological object, and its thesis of the immanence of consciousness and the objectivity and transcendence of the objects of consciousness. 'There can be no doubt about this point . . . He who in the Bible encounters man in the objectivity of the divine . . . is not one object in the series of other objects of man's cognisance.'[4] As object of the knowledge of God, God differentiates himself from all other epistemological objects precisely in his being-as-object, which *cannot* be defined in terms of the objectivity of other objects. And in that in his being-as-object God differentiates himself from all other objects of human knowledge, he himself also differentiates the human person who knows God in his or her being-subject from all other ways in which the human person as knowing subject stands over against an object which is to be known. The same would also be true with regard to modern attempts to correct classical epistemology ontologically (N. Hartmann), or to think back into its essence and so to overcome it at its starting-point (M. Heidegger). This is not because these attempts are not to be taken seriously, but because, if they do wish to be taken seriously, they cannot undertake to demonstrate the possibility of the knowledge of God as an 'utterly unique occurrence in the range of all knowledge',[5] without from the beginning

[2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] On the problem of classical epistemology in the context of theological knowledge, see now G. Stammler, 'Das Verhältnis von wissenschaftlicher und theologischer Erkenntnis', *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 17 (1963), pp. 75ff. and 245ff.; idem, 'Vom Erkenntnis-Charakter der theologischen Aussagen', *Kerygma und Dogma* 9 (1963), pp. 259ff.

[4] *CD* II/1, p. 14.

[5] Ibid.

putting themselves 'out of range'. But even the attempt to leave behind 'the range of all knowledge' in favour of the knowledge of God remains theologically irrelevant, because the 'separating out' which occurs with the knowledge of God only takes place because 'God separates Himself as well as the . . . man . . . i.e. makes Himself known as distinct from all other objects. And at the same time He also sanctifies man in his relationship to Himself, i.e. puts him into a separated position'.[6] 'Separated' here obviously cannot mean that God is differentiated from all other objects as a strange and isolated object, requiring from us a special awareness which makes us forget our context (like a little prince in a great wilderness). Nor can 'separated' mean that, in differentiation from all other being, God demands a special awareness of his being. God is 'separated' neither as one object from other objects, nor in the manner of the non-objectivity of being over against all other beings. Rather, God is separated *in* his being-as-object. 'Certainly we have God as an object, but not in the same way as we have other objects.'[7] The mode of his being-as-object differentiates God as object from all other objects. And the mode of his being-as-object determines the uniqueness of the being-as-subject in which the human person comes to be the subject of the knowledge of God.

(a) God's being-as-object as God's being-revealed

God's being-as-object is his being-revealed. God is the object of the knowledge of God in so far as he has manifested himself. And in so far as God has manifested himself in his revelation and thus made himself the object of the knowledge of God, he has also made the human person into the subject of the knowledge of God. '[T]his knowledge first of all creates the

[6] Ibid., p. 15; cf. pp. 6f., where Barth emphasises 'that everything that is described as "God" on the basis of a free choice cannot possibly be God; and that everything that is declared, on the grounds of this presupposition, to be the knowledge of God cannot have any reality or possibility as knowledge of God'.

[7] Ibid., p. 21.

subject of its knowledge by coming into the picture.'[8] Thus the human person *is* the subject of the knowledge of God only because and in that he or she *becomes* (*fit*) this subject. That means, on the one hand, that God's being-as-object is not the result of human objectification of God, but, on the contrary, the being-as-subject of the person who knows God is the result of God's being-as-object which is actually fulfilled as self-interpretation. And that means, on the other hand, that the human person is subject of the knowledge of God *only in the event* of the knowledge of God, 'of the knowledge of God in its actual fulfilment'.[9] Equally, that means that God's 'objectivity' is likewise to be thought of only as *event*. God *makes* himself objective. He *is* only objective as the one who has *made* himself objective. If the event-character of God's being-as-object is ignored, God remains unknown. The object of the knowledge of God is 'the actual being of God'[10] which is actual precisely in its being-as-object. To separate act and being at this point would be to ruin everything.

God's being-as-object, and the corresponding human being-as-subject in the knowledge of God, must, however, be defined more precisely. If God's being-as-object is his being-revealed, then God is object in his *Word*. For Barth, indeed, defined revelation as God's self-interpretation. But if God is objective in his *Word*, then it is true 'that through His word God is actually known'.[11] God's being-as-object thus consists in the fact that God as God has become *speakable*. And the knowledge of God consists in the fact that the God who as God has become speakable comes to speech in that 'he is considered and conceived by men'.[12] This event, in which the God who as God has become speakable comes to speech in human words, is faith. 'Faith is the total positive relationship of man to the God who gives Himself to be known in His Word . . . It is the

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., p. 5.
[10] Ibid., p. 22.
[11] Ibid., p. 4.
[12] Ibid., p. 9.

Yes which [man] pronounces in his heart when confronted by this God . . . in the light of the clarity that God is God and that He is his God . . . It is in this occurrence of faith that there is the knowledge of God',[13] which, in the certainty of faith is 'mediated knowledge'.[14]

The being-as-subject of the person who knows God is therefore faith. But since, as we have seen, the human person is only the subject of the knowledge of God in so far as he or she is made (*fit*) this subject, faith is not to be understood as a general human capacity for knowledge (*cum assensione cogitare* [to think with assent]), by virtue of which God could then still be objectified. Rather, 'faith as the positive relationship of man to God comes from God Himself' in so far as 'God encounters man in the Word'.[15] God comes before us in his Word. Faith comes to us from God through his Word. In faith we come before God. Accordingly, God is to be perceived in God's Word. God allows himself be perceived through his Word, in that he grants faith. In faith God is perceived. 'Man knows God in that he stands before God.'[16] That means, however, that God's being-as-subject is retained in his being-as-object, at the point at which he 'enters into the relationship of object to man the subject'.[17] There is here no *unio mystica* [mystical union] of, or any kind of identity between, the subject and the object of the knowledge of God. In his being-as-object, God is not 'objectified' in such a way that one could identify oneself with him.[18] Rather,

[13] Ibid., p. 12.

[14] Ibid., p. 9.

[15] Ibid., p. 12.

[16] Ibid., p. 9.

[17] Ibid.

[18] The danger of all theological statements consists in such objectification, not in the possibility that God, as 'the one pole in this relation between God and man' is 'robbed of his own stability', so that 'God "is" now only in the event of this relation' (Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God*, p. 49). All this can only happen at one pole which as such has become objectified. A God who has been objectified as one pole of the relation between God and humanity can certainly be robbed of all stability, and *explained* as an objectification of the defects of human subjectivity elevated to the positive and superlative (Feuerbach), or as an objectification taken back into its subjectivity (thus the frequent caricature of Bultmann; cf., for example, G. Noller,

in his being-as-object God *remains deus coram homine* [God before the human person] and, in becoming the subject of the knowledge of God, the human person *remains homo coram deo* [the human person before God]. But God and the human person remain before each other in this way only as long as they give themselves to this relation, and hence in so far as God becomes speakable as God, and in so far as the human person brings this God to speech as the God who has become speakable. *Without* this speech-event there would indeed be a *unio mystica* of *silence.* In that God manifests himself in his Word, there is, nevertheless, a permanent distinction between God and humanity. God as God differentiates himself from humanity precisely at the point at which he reveals himself to humanity. As knowledge of God, faith is the acknowledgment of this distinction between God and humanity which takes place when God comes to be expressed in human *speech.* In this sense the knowledge of faith means 'the union of man with the God who is distinct from him'.[19] For 'God distinguishes Himself from man in this event.'[20]

(b) God's being-as-object as sacramental reality

The differentiation of God from the person who knows him is at the same time defined by Barth as the differentiation of God's being-as-object from the objectivity of other objects. 'We have all other objects as they are determined by the prearranged mode of our existence. And this is so because we first of all consciously have ourselves.'[21] By contrast, the position of the

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Sein und Existenz [Munich: Kaiser, 1962], p. 107: 'God vanishes in the ego'). But that can only be true of an objectified God whose being-as-object is not thought of radically as *event.* The more radically we think of God's being-as-object as event, the clearer it is that God *remains* the one who *makes* himself the object, and therefore humanity to be the subject, of theological knowledge. The more radically God is proclaimed as *deus coram hominibus* [God before humanity], the more clearly can humanity be proclaimed as *coram deo* [before God].

[19] *CD* II/1, p. 15.

[20] Ibid., p. 31.

[21] Ibid., p. 21.

human person over against God's being-as-object is 'the position of a fundamentally and irrevocably determined subsequence'.[22] This 'subsequence' of the human person over against God's being-as-object is 'the position of grace. Knowledge of God as knowledge of faith either occurs in this position or it does not take place at all.'[23] The gracious prevenience of God's being-as-object over against the human person who knows God consists in the fact that, in distinction from all other objects, God in his freedom *makes* himself object for us, *gives* himself to be known. This object cannot intelligibly be grasped[24] (as N. Hartmann describes the act of knowing), unless in his freedom God gives himself to be grasped. God's objectivity is his gracious intelligibility.

But, in his being-as-object, God is only graspable *sub contrario* [under the opposite]. God's being-as-object is *mediately* objective in his revelation 'in which He meets us under the sign and veil of other objects'.[25] Accordingly, the person who knows God 'always stands indirectly before God. He stands directly before another object, one of the series of all other objects. The objectivity of this other object represents the objectivity of God . . . This other object is thus the medium by which God gives Himself to be known and in which man knows God.'[26] The fact that another object ('a part of the reality surrounding [man] which is different from God')[27] can be introduced as a mediation of God's being-as-object is certainly not something grounded in the mediating object itself, but in God's making

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] 'Our viewing and conceiving are not at all capable of grasping God' for '[i]t is indeed our viewing and conceiving. But we ourselves have no capacity for fellowship with God' (*CD* II/1, p. 182). See also p. 187 where we read 'that God does not belong to the objects which we can subjugate to the process of our viewing, conceiving and expressing and therefore our spiritual oversight and control . . . God is inapprehensible.' The possibility of knowing God is thus grounded *extra nos* [outside us]. God loans the human capacity for knowledge and gives knowledge of God to this loaned capacity.

[25] Ibid., p. 16.

[26] Ibid., pp. 16f.

[27] Ibid., p. 17.

use of it as such. As a piece of objective reality of which God makes use, it is 'peculiarly a work of God', so that 'above and beyond its own existence (which is also God's work, of course) [it] may and must serve to attest the objectivity of God and therefore to make the knowledge of God possible and necessary'.[28] Such an object, taken from the range of all other objects, is a 'special' work of God which mediates God's objectivity by virtue of the special event in which God himself chooses the object to be a medium of the knowledge of God. This special event guards the 'objectivising of God' which 'always occurs concretely in the use of a medium'[29] from becoming a 'sort of atlas of revelation from which we can read the being of God without God Himself speaking to us through it all in His act as the living Lord, according to His free grace'.[30]

If, according to Barth, God's being-as-object for the person who knows God can only be perceived and conceived in the objectivity of a medium which witnesses to God's being-as-object, a medium taken from the created reality which surrounds man, then we must follow Barth in making a clear distinction between God's being-as-object as such and the creaturely objectivity which witnesses to God's being-as-object. Barth expresses this distinction by making the conceptual contrast between 'primary' and 'secondary' objectivity.[31] We will have briefly to turn to what Barth understands by God's 'primary objectivity' in order to be able adequately to define God's 'secondary objectivity' which he has for us in his revelation.

According to Barth, we have to speak of God's 'primary objectivity', because in the objectivity of his revelation, in which he lets himself be known to men, God *reveals himself as the Lord.*[32] We have seen that, for Barth, the category of the lordship of God expresses the *capacity* for revelation, the

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., p. 29.
[30] Ibid., p. 23.
[31] Ibid., p. 16.
[32] Ibid., pp. 44f.

possibility of revelation which is grounded in the being of God. This possibility which is grounded in the being of God is theologically deduced as the actuality of God's being by a process of 'inference'. Hence for Barth there is a basic principle which serves as an ontological axiom, and which is itself grounded in revelation: 'Where the actuality exists there is also the corresponding possibility.'[33] Thus precisely in order to understand the objectivity of God in his revelation, Barth infers from this objectivity a 'primary objectivity' of God in God's innertrinitarian being, differentiated from God's objectivity in revelation. Barth understands this 'innertrinitarian inference' (as I would like to call it) – which determines his whole thinking in a fundamental way – as itself knowledge of revelation (and not as metaphysical speculation!), which by a process of inference reconstructs *a posteriori* the 'self-demonstration'[34] in which the self-revealing God stands before man.

If by this process of inference Barth deduces a 'primary objectivity' of God, this therefore signifies, not only that God *becomes* objective to us as the Lord, but also that he *can* become objective to us because he is the Lord. This *ability* is an actuality proper to God's being. God's ability is thus not something future to him, in Aristotle's sense of potentiality (δυνάμει ὄν) in tension with actuality (ἐνεργείᾳ ὄν)). Rather, God's ability is *really* present[35] in him as his power,[36] 'at a stroke and once and for all'.[37] 'God is who He is . . . There is no existence of God behind or beyond this entirety of His being.'[38] This is the theological assertion that the God who reveals himself *as* Lord really *is* 'the one, supreme and true Lord'.[39] God's being as

[33] Ibid., p. 5.

[34] Ibid., p. 45.

[35] But in fact 'the primary objectivity of God to Himself is reality in His eternal being as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' (ibid., p. 49).

[36] 'The fact that we know God is His work and not ours . . . The possibility on the basis of which this occurrence is realised is His divine power' (ibid., p. 40).

[37] Ibid., pp. 61f.

[38] Ibid., p. 51.

[39] Ibid.

Lord[40] makes it necessary to talk of a 'primary' objectivity of God. God's 'primary objectivity' is his glory, his 'true lordship' in which 'He is in Himself the Lord',[41] stands over against himself and knows himself. The fact that God 'is in Himself from eternity to eternity the triune God, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', is 'the inner strength of His self-demonstration as the Lord'.[42] Because as the Lord God is objective to himself, he demonstrates himself to us in 'secondary objectivity'.

God's innertrinitarian being-as-object is fulfilled in the act in which God knows *himself.* In revelation God gives the human person a share in this event of the knowledge of God and of his truth.[43] This participation is first of all made possible through the event of God's knowledge of himself, and is thus based on the fact that 'an occurrence takes place in God Himself which is, so to say, copied in the revelation in which man participates ... In revelation itself we again see God's self-knowledge, God's own and original objectivity in the modes of being of the Father and of the Son through the mode of being of the Holy Spirit.'[44] But, in so far as this event, and thus God's proper and original being-as-object, is 'copied' in revelation, participation in this event is indirect. The indirectness of our participation in God's knowledge of himself does not mean that in revelation God does not give himself to be known by us wholly, but 'only in part, so that we still have to await the revelation of another God in another and higher order, or the revelation of the same God in a different form'.[45] *According to Barth,*

[40] Barth later makes differentiations within the lordship of God 'in the sphere of God as the sphere of His own truth' (ibid., p. 49) in order to see the obedient 'way of the Son of God into the far country' (*CD* IV/1, p. 157) grounded and made possible in the innertrinitarian obedience of the Son to the Father.

[41] *CD* II/1, p. 47.

[42] Ibid.

[43] The event in which God knows himself is the truth of this knowledge.

[44] *CD* II/1, p. 51.

[45] Ibid.

nothing more can be added to the knowledge of faith. Rather, it will be confirmed eschatologically.[46]

The indirectness of our participation in the truth of God consists in the fact that 'God gives Himself to be known . . . in an objectivity different from His own, in a creaturely objectivity'.[47] For Barth, the fact that in his work God gives himself to be known *sub contraria specie* [under the opposite species] is a *sacramental* matter. 'We can say quite simply that revelation means sacrament, i.e. the self-witness of God, the representation of His truth . . . in the form of creaturely objectivity.'[48] In so far as God reiterates his own objectivity in the creaturely objectivity which is foreign to him, God's being-as-object is sacramental reality. God's being-as-object as sacramental reality signifies an *honour* for the creature which 'in its objectivity becomes the representative of the objectivity of God Himself'. But no less fundamentally, God's being-as-object as sacramental reality is 'for God Himself a renunciation of the visibility of His distinction over against the creature'.[49] Because God is the *deus revelatus* [revealed God] who graciously honours his creature, in his sacramental being-as-object he is the *deus absconditus* [hidden God].[50] In his sacramental being-as-object, God is the *deus absconditus* in that he makes the created reality, in whose objectivity he is objective, *speak* for him. For God's sacramental being-as-object consists in the fact that 'He permits some one of His creatures or a happening in the sphere and

[46] The 'limits of the knowledge of God' do not make knowledge of God incomplete. For the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the knowledge of God consist in the fact 'that in it we have to do with God Himself *by God Himself*, in insurpassable and incontestable certainty'. The limitation of the knowledge of God by God himself gives knowledge of God its perfection. Within this limitation, the proclamation which brings salvation takes place. 'But what is sufficient for our salvation cannot, as knowledge of God, be other than perfect' (*CD* II/1, pp. 180f.).

[47] Ibid., p. 52.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., pp. 54f.

[50] Similarly already in the 1929 article 'Die Lehre von den Sakramenten', *Zwischen den Zeiten* 7 (1929), p. 439: 'God is unveiled to us in the sign. But the sign is also his veiling.'

time of the world created by Him to speak for Him.'[51] God's being-as-object is therefore sacramental reality in that, *in* the reality which surrounds us, God brings himself to speech *through* this reality. God's being-as-object as sacrament means: God speaks of himself in a worldly manner, that is, God speaks with us in a human way. Thus the 'humanity of Jesus Christ as such is the first sacrament'.[52]

As the first sacrament, '[t]he existence of the human nature of Jesus Christ' is the 'basic reality and substance of the creatureliness which He has commissioned and empowered to speak of Him, the basic reality and substance of the sacramental reality of His revelation'.[53] From the existence of the man Jesus 'a sacramental continuity stretches backwards ... and forwards';[54] but this sacramental continuity is grounded exclusively in the existence of the man Jesus, *with* whom it brings other creatures into a common history, creatures who attest

[51] *CD* II/1, p. 53.

[52] Ibid., p. 54. In *CD* IV/2, Barth seriously questions whether the glory of Jesus Christ, marked out through the presence of God, is not the *one and only* sacrament of the Christian Church. 'Was it a wise action on the part of the Church when it ceased to recognise in the incarnation, in the *nativitas Jesu Christi* [birth of Jesus Christ], in the mystery of Christmas, the one and only sacrament, fulfilled once and for all, by whose actuality it lives as the one form of the one body of its Head, as the earthly-historical form of the existence of Jesus Christ in the time between His ascension and return? Has it really not enough to occupy it in the giving and receiving of this one sacrament, whose actuality it has to attest in its proclamation and therefore in baptism and the Lord's Supper, but whose actuality it cannot represent or repeat in any other way either in its preaching or in baptism and the Lord's Supper? However we may understand these "sacraments" (and then, of course, the sacramental character of the Church and its action), what was it that really happened, that was hazarded and achieved, when particular sacraments, or a particular sacramental action and being, were placed alongside that one which took place and in Jesus Christ?' Cf. p. 40, where the event of the incarnation is understood as 'the great Christian mystery and sacrament beside which there is, in the strict and proper sense, no other'. As early as 1929 Barth had designated 'the incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ' as *the* 'great Christian mystery or sacrament' ('Die Lehre von den Sakramenten', p. 439). When in IV/2 he makes the formulation more radical in order to preserve the concept of sacrament for the incarnation, he takes up an old Reformation tradition. On this, see E. Jüngel and K. Rahner, *Was ist ein Sakrament?* (Freiburg: Herder, 1971), pp. 11–40.

[53] *CD* II/1, p. 53.

[54] Ibid., p. 54.

God's objectivity along with 'the attestation which occurred through the man Jesus'.[55] Because *gratio unionis* [by the grace of the union] the human nature of Jesus, that is, 'the existence of the man Jesus . . . through its union with the eternal Word of God',[56] has attested God in his objectivity in a definitive way, 'the existence of this creature in his unity with God does mean the promise that other creatures may attest in their objectivity what is real only in this creature that is to say, God's own objectivity – so that to that extent they are the temple, instrument and sign of God as He is'.[57] The sacramental priority of the man Jesus consists in the fact that in the existence of this man God is *uniquely* objective. But the uniqueness of God's being-as-object in the humanity of Jesus Christ 'means God's self-humiliation and self-alienation' and, with this, 'the concealment of His objectivity by the quite different objectivity of the creature'.[58] The *limitation* in which God is sacramentally objective in the objectivity of the creature is, however, to the creature's benefit as the sacramental *identification* of the divine being-as-object. God's utter estrangement from himself in the sacramental objectivity of Jesus dying on the cross is to the *benefit* of humanity as the final sacramental definition of God's being-as-object.

As God's creaturely being-as-object, sacramental reality is thus an honour, not only for the creature (object) in whose creatureliness God becomes visible and comprehensible (object), but also an honour for the one (subject) who *knows God* in this creaturely objectivity. In that this knowledge of God takes place, God's self-estrangement through the medium of the sacramental reality is to our benefit. That is the event of the *covenant*. 'Revelation occurs in the form of this sacramental reality, i.e. in such a way that God elevates and selects a definite creaturely subject–object relationship to be the instrument of

[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., p. 53.
[57] Ibid., p. 54.
[58] Ibid., p. 55.

the covenant between Himself the Creator and man as His creature.'[59] And so we have to distinguish between sacramental reality as the *place* of God's being(-as-object) in creation and God's being (revealed) which *occurs* in this place, between sacramental reality *as creation* and the revelation which first of all constitutes God's sacramental reality *as covenant*, between sacramental reality *as nature* and the presence of God which makes the reality into a sacrament *as grace*.

Because creation and covenant, nature and grace, sacramental medium and revelation are as such *not identical*, there is a possibility that creation will obstruct the covenant, that nature will usurp grace, that the sacramental medium itself will claim to be revelation, that, therefore, no knowledge of God occurs. 'The very thing can fail to happen which, because this form is given, ought to happen. The direct opposite can even happen.'[60] That is the *danger* to which God exposes himself when he makes himself sacramentally objective. For, in that God *makes* himself sacramentally objective, he *is* sacramentally objective in the sense 'that, by His being revealed to us as He and as Thou, He remains hidden from us as I and therefore in the being and essence of His Godhead'.[61] God's hiddenness is his *renunciation* which corresponds to the honouring of the creation. As renunciation God's hiddenness is also *grace*. Indeed, 'it is because the fellowship between God and us is established and continues by God's grace that God is hidden from us'.[62]

Finally, we need to draw attention to the fact that, according to Barth, God's being-as-object in sacramental reality means

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., p. 58. The thoughtless objection that statements about God are then impossible (which, in view of the expositions in the *Church Dogmatics* would amount to the charge that Barth sought to do what he had himself declared impossible) fails to see that, for Barth, it is God's 'I' which lets him be revealed as 'He' and 'Thou'. The 'hidden God' is only known as the hidden God in revelation, because the *revealed* God *is* the hidden God. Correspondingly, with the God who reveals himself as 'He' and 'Thou', the 'we' of human existence also becomes thematic. Revelation is not an exclusive but a transitive, communicative event (cf. *CD* IV/3, p. 8).

[62] *CD* II/1, p. 188.

that God 'has . . . given us time'.[63] God gives us 'His time' which he has 'for us': 'revelation time'. God allows us his revelation time, but just 'by the means of sacramental reality', i.e. 'at the heart of our time'.[64] And so God *allows* us our time in order to grant us his time in our time and thereby to grant us time for him. That God's being-as-object in the objectivity of the creature allows us *our* time means equally that God's being-as-object is known 'in *repetition*',[65] that in its entirety the truth which is to be known 'is always truth for us temporally. It is truth which always needs to be repeated.'[66] To dispute the fact that the truth needs to be repeated would simply be to fail to understand its temporality and the sacramental mediation of God's being-as-object. God is temporally objective, that is, 'in such a way that our standing before God in truth is a walking before Him in consequence of His walking before us in ever new forms of His one revelation with us'.[67]

(c) God's being-as-object as an anthropological existentiale

If God's being-as-object in creaturely objectivity means that God gives us his time in allowing us our time, then God's being-as-object has anthropological significance. The anthropological significance of God's being-as-object consists in the fact that through his being-as-object God brings our existence into a definite relationship to his existence. Where God shows himself as an object of human knowledge, he brings human existence into the 'relationship of love and fear to His existence'.[68] Thus

[63] *CD* II/1, p. 62.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., p. 61.

[66] Ibid., p. 62.

[67] Ibid. Bultmann can similarly describe faith 'in the transcendent presence of God' when he says 'that faith in the transcendent presence of God can find expression in talk of the "*transformations of God*" – an expression chosen by Ernst Barlach in order to state that the paradox of the presence of God in this world assumes ever new forms' ('Der Gottesgedanke und der moderne Mensch' in *Glauben und Verstehen* IV (Tübingen: Mohr, 1975), p. 67.

[68] *CD* II/1, p. 39.

at the anthropological level, the fact that God is objective means that we may love God above all things and must fear him above all things. In his being-as-object God is there for us, giving us his time. In this way he shows himself to be the one who is worthy of our love; and, since he is not other than he shows himself to be, he is deserving of love. In his being-as-object God is also with us, allowing us our time. With this, he creates 'in us the possibility . . . to know Him'.[69] Since God is not obligated to give us this freedom but grants it as love, then because we *may* love God above all things, we *must* fear him above all things. 'The man who loves God knows that it is a permission which he has not taken for himself but which is given to him . . . And for that very reason he will fear Him as the One without whom he may not love, and as the One whom not to love must mean his own end in terror.'[70]

In that we know God in his being-as-object as the one whom we may love above all things and therefore must fear above all things, 'our existence' is 'actually brought . . . into that relationship' of love and of fear.[71] In his being-as-object, God makes it his concern that we do not objectify him but respect the act which constitutes his being-as-object. God makes it his concern that we ourselves become 'a correspondence of this act, in ourselves and our whole existence and therefore [that] our considering and conceiving [become] the human act corresponding to the divine act'.[72] This human act is called faith. It takes place in that we love and fear God above all things. The fact that in his being-as-object God makes this relationship of our existence to God's existence (which as the relationship of faith is the relationship of love of God to fear of God) his

[69] Ibid., p. 33.

[70] Ibid., pp. 33ff. The grounding of the need to fear God in the permission to love God is characteristic of Barth's understanding of the relation of law and gospel. The fact that love of God and fear of God originate in God's being-as-object in Jesus Christ points back to the unity of gospel and law in the event of God's revelation. For Barth, gospel and law are *two modes of the one Word of God* with which we have to do in the sacramental objectivity of the man Jesus as the Word of God.

[71] Ibid., p. 39.

[72] Ibid., p. 26.

concern is what gives God's being-as-object its anthropological-existential significance. God in his being-as-object is the one who makes humanity his concern, makes his concern the love and fear of God which define human existence. In fact, therefore, all legitimate talk about God's being-as-object must at the same time be a statement about humanity. That is true for God's sacramental being-as-object, but it also has consequences for statements about what Barth terms God's 'primary objectivity', as is made clear by the innertrinitarian grounding of the doctrines of election and reconciliation in the *Church Dogmatics*.

It will be advisable to take the precaution of defending our talk of God's being as an anthropological *existentiale* against two objections. The first objection is suggested from within the 'school' of Barth, where some fear that, understood as an anthropological *existentiale,* God's being might be dissolved into human existence, or, rather, perverted into the 'whence of my frantic life'. Against that, we have to say that God's being in its ('secondary') objectivity was called as an anthropological *existentiale,* because we learned to understand this objectivity in such a way that here, in that he makes himself objective, God is fully in act as the one who determines human existence for love and fear of God, and thus as the one who makes love and fear of God his concern. God's being as such is not an anthropological *existentiale.* Nevertheless, human existence is certainly constituted as such through this *existentiale.* But this means that human existence is constituted *extra nos* [outside us] and, in being constituted in this way, is determined to be a *nos extra nos esse* [being outside ourselves] in the act of the love and fear *of God.*

At this point, however, the other objection arises, which is to be expected from the school of Bultmann. *Existentialia* are regarded as expressions of ontologically neutral structures; love and fear of God, however, are specific acts of Christian existence, ontic-*existentiell* realisations of human existence. Now, certainly it is not love and fear of God which we have called an anthropological *existentiale,* but rather God's being-as-object as

the being of the one who makes fear and love of God his concern. Yet the objection comes back strongly to counter this definition. For as the one who makes our love and fear of God his concern, God can only be grasped in the event of the love and fear of God, so that to talk of the being of God as an anthropological *existentiale* appears meaningless. Against this we may say that God *is* the one who makes love and fear of God his concern, and so the one who defines the essence of human existence, even when human existence does *not* realise itself as the act of love and fear of God. Love and fear of God are only possible because and in so far as human existence is constituted through the being of God as the one who makes love and fear of God his concern. The *absence* of love and fear of God is the *denial* of love and fear of God, and therefore always sin. In the face of God's being-as-object as the one who makes love and fear of God his concern, sin is indeed an *impossible* impossibility; nevertheless, *through* the definition of human existence for love and fear of God alone, sin becomes an impossible *possibility*. Luther's statement that 'whatever you give your heart to and trust is really your God' is true in its positive and negative senses precisely because the righteous God *is* the one who makes love and fear of God in human existence his concern. And in that human existence constitutes itself through setting the heart upon something (*ponere seipsum extra se* [to put oneself outside oneself]) it is always constituted through God's being-as-object. Judged theologically, nihilism and atheism (like faith) are only made possible ontologically through God's being-as-object, even if (unlike faith) as the impossible possibility excluded from the beginning and negated by God.[73] Hence we call God's being-as-object an anthropological *existentiale*. The expression can, however, be abandoned as long as in jettisoning the concept we do not lose the essential substance. Part of this substance is,

[73] Cf. *CD* IV/1, p. 747, where Barth speaks of the ontological necessity of faith. Cf. also p. 480, where it is maintained that the human person cannot become ontologically godless. See my essay '"keine Menschenlosigkeit Gottes . . ."', in *Barth-Studien* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1982), pp. 332–47.

certainly, agreement that God's covenant is the inner ground of his creation.

The difference between the theology of Karl Barth and that of Rudolf Bultmann is therefore not grounded in the fact that Barth's theological statements leave out of account the anthropological relation given in revelation, whereas Bultmann, by contrast, dissolves theological statements into anthropological statements. Such descriptions label the theology of both theologians superficially and so fail to understand them at all. Much more may the difference be seen in the fact that Barth believes that a distinction must be made between God's being-as-object in his revelation as 'secondary objectivity' and a 'primary objectivity' in the innertrinitarian being of God which makes possible this 'secondary objectivity', whereas Bultmann holds that the question of the possibility of revelation (which is grounded in God) is forbidden. In order to reach agreement, it is necessary to perceive that in asking about the possibility of revelation, Barth does not seek to reach behind revelation by transcendental questioning, but rather sees himself induced to make this inquiry on the ground of revelation. But then he cannot leave out of account the fact that all further theological statements are anthropologically relevant. Nevertheless, for Barth, the anthropological relevance of theological statements is not the criterion of their truth. The criterion of the truth of theological statements is, for Barth, given in the fact that in all theological statements the freedom of the subject of the revelation remains safeguarded. Conversely, for Bultmann, the anthropological relevance of theological statements is the criterion of their truth because, for him, revelation is always an eschatological occurrence which as such becomes an event in an historical (*historisch*) 'that'.[74] It is a matter of the 'paradoxical identity'[75] in which an historical (*historisch*) 'that' becomes historically (*geschichtlich*) meaningful as eschatological event.

[74] Cf. G. Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation* (London: Collins, 1966), pp. 118f.

[75] Cf. G. Bornkamm, 'Die Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns in der neueren Diskussion', in *Geschichte und Glaube* I (Munich: Kaiser, 1968), pp. 268ff.

Bultmann insists on the '*est*' [is] of this paradoxical identity, whereas for Barth, in accordance with the distinction between God's 'primary' and 'secondary objectivity', God himself has actually come into the picture, but 'only' in his work which points to him as a sign.[76] For Barth, even Jesus' humanity is in this sense a 'sacramental reality', a parable. What finally separates Barth from Bultmann is the same reservation which Barth also has towards Luther's teaching on the Lord's Supper: God's presence in the parable of sacramental reality must not lead to an equation between God and our reality,[77] if God is not to be objectified. The intention which bound Barth and Bultmann together in their common beginnings[78] has thus remained unchanged in both. On the other hand, the ways of thinking which led both theologians to move away from each other are fundamentally distinct. The problem of the relation of Barth's theology to that of Bultmann can only be set out with systematic adequacy through a contrast between 'analogy' and 'paradoxical identity'.[79]

[76] Cf. *CD* II/1, p. 39; and *Anselm. Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, p. 23.

[77] Cf. K. Barth, 'Luther's Doctrine of the Eucharist. Its Basis and Purpose', in *Theology and Church* (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 74–111, and 'Die Lehre von den Sakramenten', p. 456.

[78] Cf. G. Bornkamm, 'Die Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns', pp. 221ff.

[79] Bultmann also speaks of the possibility of analogical speech about God's actions (see 'On the Problem of Demythologizing', in *The New Testament and Mythology* (London: SCM Press, 1985), pp. 95–130, but characteristically under the presupposition of faith which maintains the '*paradoxical* identity' between worldly occurrences and divine action. Schubert Ogden's attempt ('Zur Frage der "ritchtigen" Philosophie', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 61 [1964], p. 103) to make the concept of analogy decisive for Bultmann's thinking is hardly convincing. It is no accident that the clarification of the concept of analogy which he hoped Bultmann himself would provide was not forthcoming.

III

GOD'S BEING IS IN BECOMING

(a) God's being-in-act

In his discussion of the problem of the knowledge of God, Barth already emphasised that, in the event 'of the knowledge of God whose subject is God the Father and God the Son through the Holy Spirit', 'we men are taken up into this event as secondary, subsequent subjects'.[1] The taking up of humanity into the event of the knowledge of God is grounded in the taking up of humanity into the event of the being of God. That sounds strange, and in no way does Barth think of it in the sense of a θεοποίησις [deification] of the being of humanity. The taking up of humanity into the event of God's being is, rather, humanity's salvation. And 'salvation is more than being. Salvation is fulfilment, the supreme, sufficient, definitive and indestructible fulfilment of being. Salvation is the perfect being which is not proper to created being as such but is still future. . . . To that extent salvation is its *eschaton* . . . being which has a part in the being of God . . . not a divinised being but a being which is hidden in God, and in that sense (distinct from God and secondary) eternal being.'[2] The taking up of humanity

[1] *CD* II/1, p. 181: 'Therefore we are not speaking only of an event which takes place on high, in the mystery of the divine Trinity. We are indeed speaking of this event, and the force of anything that is said about the knowledge of God consists in the fact that we speak also and first of this event. But we are now speaking of the revelation of this event and therefore of our participation in it. We are speaking of the human knowledge of God on the basis of this revelation and therefore of an event which formally and technically cannot be distinguished from what we call knowledge in other connexions, from human cognition.'

[2] *CD* IV/1, p. 8.

into the event of God's being, which comes to us from God as salvation, confronts us once again with the problem of God's being. For we must ask about the *ground* of humanity's being taken up into the event of God's being. This question faces us with the particular event in the self-relatedness of God's being which defines the concreteness of God's being in relation to man, that is, the event of the 'election of Jesus Christ'. The election of Jesus Christ implies a divine decision concerning God's being whose explicit consequence for us will be treated as the suffering of God. But both in the election of Jesus Christ and in the suffering of God we are concerned with 'God's being-in-act'. We shall do well therefore briefly to recall the specification of the concept of being which Barth set out under this heading in his doctrine of God.

After what has been said about revelation as God's self-interpretation, it is clear that, in Barth's talk of God's being, the concept of being is not used in the sense of a general doctrine of being. Barth's *Dogmatics* makes ontological statements all the way through. But this dogmatics is not an ontology; at least not in the sense of a doctrine of being drawn up on the basis of a general ontological conception within which the being of God (as highest being, as being-itself, etc.) would be treated in its place. Barth directs strong protest to the 'threatened absorption of the doctrine of God into a doctrine of being', from which he certainly does not exempt Protestant orthodoxy.[3] Yet he does not shy away from making ontological statements. All statements about the knowledge of God and thus about God's being-as-object possess a thoroughly ontological character. That is no less true for Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. Thus employing the concept of being in dogmatics is unavoidable. Barth will 'not yield to a revulsion against the idea of being as such' but rather seeks to 'take up the concept . . . with complete impartiality'.[4] However, the concept of being which is taken up in all impartiality must immediately be adequately

[3] *CD* II/1, p. 360.
[4] Ibid.

specified, both theologically and ontologically, if it is to be suitable for responsible speech about God's being. But that means, for Barth, that the concept of being must be measured by the revelation of God. God's revelation is the criterion of all ontological statements in theology. In the face of this criterion ontological statements in theology are not only legitimate but indispensable.[5]

Revelation means God's self-interpretation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have now become acquainted with Barth's trinitarian explication of this subject-matter and from what we know we may immediately note how in his talk of God's being Barth specifies the concept of being theologically by the criterion of revelation. The being of God was conceived of in the unity of three modes of being differentiated from one another. God's being is thus *self-related* being. As being it is relationally structured. But this relational ordering of God's being does not structure God's being as an impersonal structure[6] over against this being; rather, the modes of God's being which are differentiated from each other are related to each other in such a way that each mode of God's being *becomes* what it *is* only *with* the two other modes of being. The relational structuring in God's being expresses different 'relations of origin' and 'processions' in God's being. As the being of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God's being is thus a *being in becoming*. The doctrines of the *perichoresis* and appropriation

[5] *Contra* Otto Weber, whose chief objection to Barth's theology concerns the ontological character of theological statements (see O. Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 2 vols), at the same time criticising Barth for going beyond the paradox of Christian revelation 'by thinking, as it were, into the essence of God' (vol. 2, p. 160). In Barth's sense one would indeed have to point out that ontological statements in theology do not imply a theological ontology (a postulate of Heinrich Ott: see the conclusion of his book *Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1955]). The fact that Barth thinks of paradox as a mode of speech without any intrinsic worth is grounded in the fact that he tries to think revelation entirely from God. In doing this, paradox is not really introduced into the essence of God; rather, it is thereby taken with full seriousness that *God* is the subject and predicate of revelation: God reveals himself.

[6] Cf. *CD* II/1, pp. 299f.: 'In God there is no it that is not Himself.'

among the three differentiated modes of God's being united as a triunity specified this knowledge: God's being is in becoming. And precisely because from all eternity God being is a being in becoming, God is already 'ours in advance'. Already in advance – hence Barth speaks of the *being* of God: 'God is not swallowed up in the relation and attitude of Himself to the world and us as actualised in His revelation',[7] but God is fully subsumed in his relation and attitude to himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But already in this being of his, God is none other than the one who he is in his revelation. He is thus in this being of his already *ours* in advance, and therefore the statement is true: God's being is *in becoming*.

This statement, too, will certainly require further specification. It means, first of all, that God in his being is indeed to be thought of as *subject*, but subject in no other sense than as *active* subject. God *is* active. In this sense Barth also specifies the concept of being with regard to God's being in his doctrine of God, whose foundational chapter is deliberately entitled 'The *Reality* of God'[8] – making use of a concept 'which holds together being and act, instead of tearing them apart like the idea of "essence"'.[9] Barth's specification of the concept of being is both theologically and ontologically significant. It is theologically decisive that the concept of being is measured by the concept of God in such a way that the concept of God is regained from the interpretation of revelation as God's self-interpretation. Revelation is an event. It is this in actual fact in so far as history belongs to revelation, just as in a proposition a logical predicate belongs to a logical subject. It is, however, not the predicate of history which makes revelation *possible* as event, but revelation as event is *possible* because revelation of itself looks for the predicate of history; and in so far as this predicate is joined to this subject – it is of the essence of revelation that history as the predicate is joined to revelation as subject –

[7] Ibid., p. 260.

[8] Ibid., p. 262.

[9] On the same grounds, however, Heidegger prefers the concept of *essence*, since this lets itself be thought verbally in the sense of *presence*.

revelation is actual, revelation *takes place.*[10] That has consequences if on the basis of the understanding of revelation as event the being of God is also understood as event. 'Seeking and finding God in His revelation, we cannot escape the action of God for a God who is not active', so that 'with regard to the being of God, the word "event" or "act" is *final*, and cannot be surpassed or compromised'.[11] But just as revelation immediately qualifies the predicate of history which belongs to it as a *special* history which *judges* all other history, so also the being of God which is to be thought of as event is not just any event, not event in general but is immediately qualified as 'an event which is in no sense to be transcended'.[12] '*Actus purus* is not sufficient as a description of God. To it there must be added at least "*et singularis*".'[13]

The particularity of God's being as event is developed by Barth in a thought process which draws an ever-narrowing circle. God's being must not be thought of as event in such a way that God's actuality is differentiated from all other actuality only as 'its essence and principle' because, while God 'is differentiated from all other actuality, He is still connected to it'.[14] God's being as event would remain only in a 'dialectical transcendence which, however strictly it may be understood, must always be understood with equal strictness as immanence'.[15] Over against

[10] Revelation as such does *not* belong to history. For '*revelation is not a predicate of history, but history a predicate of revelation*'; cf. *CD* I/2, p. 58.

[11] *CD* II/1, p. 263.

[12] Ibid., p. 262.

[13] Ibid., p. 264.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid. The dialectic of the statement 'that the *transcendent* must not be sought and cannot be found above or beyond the world, but *in the midst of this world*' (R. Bultmann, 'Der Gottesgedanke und der moderne Mensch', p. 342) is not to be understood in the sense of this 'dialectical transcendence' and so not just as 'the idea [which] is both immanent in the phenomenon and transcendent to it' (*CD* II/1, p. 264), but expresses the paradox 'that the event of revelation is at the same time both an historical as well as an eschatological event' (ibid., p. 342 n. 26). The relation of history and eschatology must then certainly be strictly defined. Bultmann's book *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957) leaves us in no doubt that the eschatological event is decisive for the history in which it occurs. If history were to be decisive for the eschatological event which occurs within it, then this event

the assumption of such a dialectical transcendence of God, which must necessarily lead to paradoxical statements about God's being, God's being is to be thought of as free from all dialectic, as 'free event, free act, free life'.[16]

We must, of course, immediately ask further about the special character of this freedom, about what is 'the specific freedom of the event'[17] of God's being. Barth defines this special character of the freedom of the event in which and as which God is, as, in distinction from natural events and from purely 'spiritual' freedom, the freedom of an act which is to be conceived 'only in the unity of spirit and nature'.[18] 'We speak of an action, of a deed, when we speak of the being of God as a happening.'[19] The *act*, however, as the specific determination of the free event, as which God's being is to be understood, is no mute act but a word-act. 'Indeed the peak of all happening in revelation, according to Holy Scripture, consists in the fact that God speaks as an I, and is heard by the thou who is addressed. The whole content of the happening consists in the fact that the Word of God became flesh.'[20] The understanding of the act in which God *is*, as *word-act*, leads us to understand God's being 'in accordance with the happening of revelation . . . as "being in person"'.[21]

God's being in person is in a specific way a *free* event in so far as it is not only 'being . . . moved in itself and therefore motivating being', but 'being which is self-moved'.[22] That means

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would be thematic only as a fact of the past. But 'Jesus Christ is the eschatological event not as an established fact of past time but as one who repeatedly addresses us here and now in preaching' (ibid., pp. 151f. [ET altered: tr]).

[16] *CD* II/1, p. 264. It should be noted that the concepts 'transcendence' and 'immanence' do not in any way form a contradiction, but are logically determinative of each other. On this, cf. G. Stammler, 'Ontologie in der Theologie?', *Kerygma und Dogma* 4 (1958), pp. 143ff.

[17] *CD* II/1, p. 265.

[18] Ibid., p. 267.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 268.

[22] Ibid.

that, as event, the being God possesses *freedom of decision.* Decision does not belong to the being of God as something supplementary to this being; rather, as event, God's being *is* his own decision. 'The fact that God's being is event, the event of God's act, necessarily . . . means that it is His own conscious, willed and executed decision.'[23] What was already worked out in the doctrine of the Trinity is now confirmed from working out a concept of being appropriate to God: God's being is constituted through historicality. For in its 'decision, and therefore personal being' God's being 'is the being of God in the nature of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' in which 'God lives from and by Himself'.[24] And because God lives solely from and by himself, the understanding of God's being as person is not some 'personification' working itself as 'personalism versus ontology', but the understanding of being in the *proper* sense appropriate to God alone. For '*propriissime solus Deus vivere dici potest*' [strictly speaking, *God alone* can be said to live].[25]

Barth hastens to make the *material* definition of the act which constitutes God's being follow immediately after this *formal* definition of the concept of being in speaking of God's being-in-act. For the tautology 'God is God' can only be resolved through a material definition of this act. As the material definition of the act in which God is, God's revelation is the resolution of the tautology. But revelation resolves the tautology in such a way that the decision about God's being is not to be understood only as a decision for *God,* but also – precisely as a decision for God – as a decision for *humanity.* God 'wills certainly to be God and He does not will that we should be God. But He does not will to be God for Himself nor as God to be alone with Himself. He wills as God to be for us and with us, who are not God.

[23] Ibid., p. 271.

[24] Ibid., pp. 271f.

[25] Ibid., p. 272. See H. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950), p. 68, who quotes Polanus' thesis: 'it is so sure, that with the utmost propriety God alone may be said to live' (Polanus, *Syntagma theologiae christianae* [Hanover, 1624] II.xv). May (and must) we not also say: 'with the utmost propriety God alone may be said to have died'?

Inasmuch as He is Himself and affirms Himself, in distinction and opposition to everything that He is not, He places Himself in this relation to us. He does not will to be Himself in any other way than He is in this relationship.'[26] God's placing of himself in relation (being as event) qualifies God's act of revelation *as love.* God acts as *the loving one* in that he wills to be ours. But since in his being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit God is also already ours in advance, then in analogy to God's relationship *ad extra,* it must also follow from the relation of God's three modes of being to one another that God *acts as the loving one.* 'In itself, first and last, it will always be this and no other relationship. God wills and does nothing different, but only one thing – this one thing.'[27] And 'this one thing . . . is the blessing of God, that which distinguishes His act as divine, and therefore also His person as divine',[28] namely, God's loving in which He, in His way, is *the* one,[29] the one who loves in freedom. Barth himself explicitly points out that this knowledge is grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity through the principle of the *perichoresis*[30] [coinherence] of the three divine modes of being, which is the ontological basis for the *analogia relationis* [analogy of relation] between God's being for himself and his being for us.

It would be appealing to follow in detail Barth's accounts of 'God's being as the one who loves' and 'God's being in freedom'. But what has been said so far is sufficient for the goal we are pursuing here. Yet it may be useful to test our statement 'God's being is in becoming' on Barth's account of God's primal decision effected in the election of Jesus Christ, and on Barth's disputed thesis concerning God's passion. In both places we are concerned with the most extreme but also indispensable consequences of the understanding of God's being which has been expounded thus far.

[26] *CD* II/1, p. 274.
[27] Ibid., p. 275.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., p. 284.
[30] Ibid., p. 297.

(b) God's primal decision

God's being-in-act was understood to mean that God is his decision. Decision sets in relation, for it is as such a setting-oneself-in-relation. Part of the peculiarity of Barth's *Dogmatics* is that God's setting-himself-in-relation points in both an inward and an outward direction at the same time. This is grounded in Barth's understanding of revelation as the self-interpretation of God in which God is his own 'double'. And so it is not surprising that this double structure of the one being of God also finds a place in the doctrine of election in the *Church Dogmatics*. We understood the one being of God in its double structure as a being in correspondence. And in the statement 'God corresponds to himself' we saw the grounding of God's being as the one who loves in freedom. In just this way, the statement defines the historicality of the being of God which reiterates itself in the historicality of revelation. This point is expressed by Barth's talk of God's primal decision, which is coupled – not by chance – with the concept of primal history. God's primal decision is understood by Barth as God's *election of grace*.

As the 'sum of the Gospel' and the 'very essence of all good news'[31] God's election of grace is the beginning of 'all the ways and works of God'.[32] In his ways and works God sets himself in relation. In speaking of a beginning of these ways and works, we mean a relation of God to that which he is not. For God himself 'has indeed no beginning'.[33] It is thus a question of the beginning of God's *opera ad extra* [external works]. But as the beginning of all the ways and works of God, God's election of grace is not only an *opus Dei ad extra* [external work of God] or, more precisely, an *opus Dei ad extra externum*[34] [external work of

[31] *CD* II/2, pp. 13f.

[32] Ibid., p. 3.

[33] Ibid., p. 102.

[34] Barth praises it as a happy inconsistency of the old Protestant Orthodoxy that, despite presupposing a concept of God as '*ens simplex et infinitum*' [simple and infinite being], according to which 'God is everything in the way of aseity, simplicity,

God directed outwards]; it is at the same time an *opus Dei ad extra internum* [external work of God directed inwards]. For election as such is not only a decision made by God and in so far an election which also certainly concerns him; it is equally a decision which affects God himself 'because originally God's election of man is a predestination not merely of man but of Himself'.[35] If, then, the decision of the election of grace not only affects elect humanity but also at the same time affects God in a fundamental way, then it is dogmatically consistent to treat the doctrine of predestination as a part of the *doctrine of God.*

The metaphysical tendency of this supralapsarian feature – to which Barth, after long consideration, accords relative precedence over any kind of infralapsarianism – which suggests itself in the doctrine of election is, however, immediately caught up by the concrete historical definition of elect humanity: Jesus. We will see that Barth's christological grounding for the doctrine of election makes a radical correction of the presuppositions of traditional supralapsarianism, thus escaping the danger inherent in supralapsarian thinking of turning both the electing God (with the doctrine of the *decretum absolutum*[36] [absolute decree]) and the history of humanity (predestined either to election or reprobation) into metaphysical realities. And we will see that the supralapsarianism whose 'historical form has to be drastically corrected and supplemented',[37] and which Barth put in its rightful place, allows the being of God and the historical being of humanity to be thought together in the doctrine of God in such a way that the demand 'to think of God's eternity as historicality without surrendering the thought of God as Creator'[38] is met in a very precise way. For in God's

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immutability, infinity, etc. but He is not the living God', it could also speak of *opera Dei ad extra interna* [external works of God directed inwards], of an *interna voluntatis divinae actio* [internal act of the divine will] (cf. ibid., p. 79).

[35] Ibid., p. 3.

[36] Rejected by Barth as an 'idolatrous concept' (ibid., p. 143).

[37] Ibid., p. 143.

[38] Cf. R. Bultmann, 'Der Gottesgedanke und der moderne Mensch', p. 346.

election of grace, which is understood as decision for the man Jesus, this man (as representative of humanity) and God are alongside one another in eternity. We have therefore to understand this decision as God's 'primal decision' which irrevocably determines God's being-in-act, or rather, as God's primal decision in which *God* determines irrevocably his being-in-act. This self-determination of God is an act of his self-relatedness as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is, however, *at the same time,* an attitude and relation of God to man and, indeed, 'the attitude and relation in which by virtue of the decision of His free love God wills to be and is God. And this relation cannot be separated from the Christian conception of God as such. The two must go together if this conception is to be truly Christian.'[39]

It is thus necessary to inquire more precisely into that primal decision which originally[40] determines the being of God and of humanity. This much can be said already:

1. God relates himself to himself in that he determines himself to be the one who elects;
2. God relates himself to humanity in that he determines humanity to be the elect.

In their generality, however, both statements are not an appropriate expression of God's primal decision. With such statements, the doctrine of election would be grounded abstractly with respect to the God who elects and abstractly with respect to elect humanity. '*Latet periculum in generalibus*'[41] [danger lurks in generalities]. Both the God who elects and elect humanity must be defined *concretely.* But the God who

[39] *CD* II/2, p. 9.

[40] The fact that through God's election of *grace* a fundamental decision is made about humanity is what gives covenant its priority over creation, which, as the 'external basis of the covenant' is referred to this covenant as the 'internal basis of creation' (*CD* III/1, §41). As a consequence, for Barth we are forbidden to formulate election, as did Aquinas and the tradition of Reformed Orthodoxy, as *quaedem pars providentiae* [part of providence] (*CD* II/2, p. 45).

[41] *CD* II/2, p. 48.

elects and elect humanity can only be defined concretely when the *attitude and relation* of God implicit in God's primal decision is concretely defined. The *attitude and relation* implicit in God's primal decision can only be grounded in revelation, which, for Barth, means christologically. Accordingly, Barth comprehends in the name Jesus Christ the God who elects, elect humanity, and God's attitude and relation which determines God to be the one who elects and elect humanity. 'Jesus Christ is the decision of God in favour of this attitude or relation. He is Himself the relation.'[42] In this relation, which is Jesus Christ, God and man are alongside each other. For in this relation, which is Jesus Christ, God relates himself to the man Jesus. And 'the man and the people represented in Him are creatures and not God'.[43] But at the same time this Jesus Christ is 'a relation which is irrevocable . . . a relation in which God is self-determined, so that the determination belongs no less to Him than all that He is in and for Himself. Without the Son sitting at the right hand of the Father, God would not be God.'[44] God has, accordingly, in the second trinitarian mode of being determined himself to be the God who elects. '*Jesus Christ is the electing God.*'[45] In that here one of the three modes of being is *determined* to be the God who elects, we have to understand God's primal decision as an *event* in the being of God which *differentiates* the modes of God's being. In so far as in Jesus Christ, the God who elects in the mode of being of the Son, and the elected man Jesus of Nazareth, are *one person,* the God who

[42] Ibid., p. 7.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p. 103. Thus from the beginning Barth took into account Rahner's concern that the trinitarian 'concept of precisely the second hypostasis in God as such' ('Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise "De Trinitate"', *Theological Investigations* 4 [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966], p. 99) must make comprehensible the incarnation of precisely *this hypostasis.* And, certainly, in such a way that the 'second hypostasis in God as such' is thought on the basis of revelation, and hence thought immediately and *concretely,* as a mode of being of the electing God, graciously related to the elect man Jesus. In this relation of the second hypostasis is reiterated the innerdivine peace, in which the Son in eternity (thus the second hypostasis in God 'as such') is obedient to the Father.

elects is already defined: 'as elected man He is also the electing God, electing them in His own humanity'.[46] But the event which determines the second mode of being in the trinitarian being of God to be the electing God may not be thought of apart from the fact that this event determines the electing *Son of God* to be as elected *man* the God who in his own humanity elects all men.

God's free self-determination in Jesus Christ is thus the will of God in action in that:

1. As the one who elects, God has *determined himself* to be this electing God in Jesus Christ.
2. As the one who elects, God has determined himself to be the electing God *and* elect humanity in Jesus Christ.
3. As the one who elects in Jesus Christ, God *elects* the man Jesus.

1. The understanding of Jesus Christ as the God who elects raises the question of what makes Jesus Christ into the God who elects. Barth answers this question with the help of the double-structure of God's being in correspondence which we have already elaborated. The fact that in the second mode of being (that of the Son) God *determines himself* to be the God who elects the man Jesus and chooses oneness with him, makes the Son the object of a choosing which takes place in God himself. After what has been said concerning the *perichoresis* of the three modes of God's being, the Son, as the one chosen by the Father for this determination, cannot be *merely an object.* That would immediately conjure up the conclusion of inferiority or even of tritheism. The eternal Son can and may, therefore, be 'no less the original Subject of this electing than He is its original object'.[47] According to Barth the eternal Son participates as subject in the election of the Father in that by his own free divine decision he *affirms* the *determination* which the

[46] *CD* II/2, p. 117.
[47] Ibid., p. 105.

Father wills for him, to be the God who elects the man Jesus and chooses oneness with him. The eternal Son *elects* his election by the Father. Thus in the innertrinitarian being he elects *obedience*. 'The obedience which He renders as the Son of God is, as genuine obedience, his own decision and electing, a decision and electing no less divinely free than the electing and decision of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Even the fact that He is elected corresponds as closely as possible to His own electing.'[48] This *correspondence* in which the Son *affirms* the will of the Father in the freedom of the Spirit is the 'harmony of the triune God'.[49]

The previous train of thought confirms the correctness of our interpretation of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. We have seen how the doctrines of *perichoresis* and appropriation taught us to understand God's trinitarian being in its historicality. We said that the unity of God's three modes of being proves itself to be *concrete* unity when it preserves the *differentiation* of the three modes of being as *concrete* differentiation. This *concrete* differentiation is preserved in that Barth differentiates the Son from the Father in the mode of being of *obedience*. We said further that, in that this takes place, the concrete unity articulates itself in oneness with the concrete differentiation of God's modes of being to form the *harmony as concreteness* of God's being. Barth's talk of the 'harmony of the triune God' in which the Son is 'no less the original Subject of this electing than He is its original object' is the concrete expression of this subject-matter whose formal features we have worked our way through.[50] Our guiding principle for the interpretation of Barth's understanding of God's being is thus confirmed: 'God corresponds to himself.' In that he corresponds to himself, God

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] The harmony of the triune God is thus *not* the harmony of a God at rest in himself, but the harmony of God's *self-moved* being. This harmony is rest *as* movement, not comparable to the peace of an unmoved mover. The fact that God rests in Himself 'does not exclude but includes the fact that His being is decision' (ibid., p. 175).

is. His correspondence to himself *occurs* as God's 'Yes' to himself.[51] This 'Yes' constitutes God's being as co-respondence.

2. God does not abandon the correspondence in which he is who he is when he turns to humanity. Rather God maintains this correspondence to the end, in that in the peace of the triune God he determines himself to be in Jesus Christ the God who elects *and* elected humanity. For 'only in this harmony' of God can the Son of God who has been determined to be the electing God 'completely fulfil . . . the will of the Father, and thus confirm and to some extent repeat as elected man the election of God'.[52]

In Jesus Christ the *concreteness* of the divine being is also maintained to the end for humanity. Therefore Barth strongly resists any grounding of the doctrine of election which works from God in *general* (as the subject of election) and from humanity in *general* (as the object of election). Only in the concrete determination of the God who elects and of elect humanity can the *doctrine* of election enable us for our part to maintain in thought the concreteness of God's being which he maintains to the end for humanity. Therefore Jesus Christ as subject and object is, for Barth, also the ground of election.

That leads Barth to the assumption of an *eternal* covenant 'which as it concerns man God made within Himself in His pre-temporal eternity'.[53] God the Father determined his eternal Son to be the God who elects and as such to unity with the humanity chosen by the Son. This determination is an eternal act. Hence Barth can speak of 'the Son of God in His oneness with the Son of Man, as foreordained from all eternity'.[54] This oneness of the Son of God and humanity in Jesus Christ which has been foreordained from all eternity is the 'covenant which God made with Himself and which is for that reason

[51] Namely, in the freedom in which 'from all eternity and in all eternity God affirms and conforms Himself' (ibid., p. 155).

[52] Ibid., p. 105.

[53] Ibid., p. 104.

[54] Ibid.

eternal',[55] and which as such makes possible the incarnation of the Son of God. In this sense God's primal decision is, at the same time, the 'primal relationship'[56] between God and humanity, in which God turns to humanity and so is *already* with humanity before humanity was created. The primal decision constitutes the primal relationship of God to humanity, and in this primal relationship there takes place 'primal history',[57] in which, *before* humanity has been created, God *already* relates himself to us. God's being takes place as *historia*

[55] Ibid., p. 107.

[56] Ibid., p. 52.

[57] Ibid., pp. 7f. Already in *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933) Barth speaks of 'the non-historical, or rather the Primal History, which conditions all history' (p. 140). In the *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf* (Munich: Kaiser, 1927), Barth uses the concept 'to designate the special relation between revelation and history' (p. 230). He designates as primal history (as 'primal-historical event') 'the Word becoming flesh, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ' (ibid.), which is thereby 'the *original pattern* or meaning of all history' (p. 238). Primal history, understood as the Word becoming flesh or as revelation, is, on the one hand, more than 'the eternal event in God himself' (i.e., 'supra-history'), because it is not only an eternal event in God himself (supra-history) but above all a temporal event (history) (pp. 231f.). On the other hand, it is more than a temporal event (history), since it is not only a temporal event (history), but also an eternal event in God (supra-history) (pp. 232–4). This means that primal history (revelation), understood as God's *opus ad extra* [external work] (p. 231), cannot be related to the innertrinitarian event 'as though we should still always find ourselves in that sphere where God is God in himself, as though it were still always a matter of that eternal event between Father, Son and Holy Spirit' (ibid.). Rather, the innertrinitarian event may, conversely, be related to primal history (revelation) 'in so far as that eternal event in God also takes place within it' (ibid.).

In *Church Dogmatics* I/2, Barth rejects the concept of 'primal history' since it can give rise to the misunderstanding that it can mediate what revelation is (cf. *CD* I/2, pp. 57f.). For '*revelation is not a predicate of history, but history is a predicate of revelation*' (ibid., p. 58; likewise *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*, p. 232). In the face of this rejection, it is surprising that in his doctrine of election Barth takes up the concept of 'primal history' again. Is he rejecting his own rejection? Or does the concept acquire a new meaning? Where is its theological place? Primal history is now that history which is played out between God and the one man Jesus (cf. *CD* II/2, p. 8), in that the Son of God takes the humanity of the man Jesus upon himself (cf. ibid., p. 124). Primal history refers to the incarnation but precedes this event (cf. ibid., p. 105). It is 'the attitude and relation in which by virtue of the decision of His free love God wills to be and is God' (ibid., p. 9) and therefore (in contrast to *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*), has its place in the trinitarian being of God.

praeveniens [prevenient history]. In this *historia praeveniens* God determines himself to be ours as one of us. In this determination, God's 'being-already-ours-in-advance', which is grounded in the trinitarian 'being-for-itself', directs itself, as it were, 'outwardly'[58] in order that in revelation there may be 'an overflowing of His inward activity and being, of the inward vitality which He has in Himself'.[59] The *historia praeveniens* in which and as which this divine self-determination takes place is Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ *is* already in the beginning with God.[60] And precisely Jesus' being in the beginning with God marks out the divine primal history as 'concrete history' which, as 'an act of divine life in the Spirit, is . . . the law which precedes all creaturely life'.[61]

But if the prevenience of the *historia praeveniens* is not to be something trivial or irrelevant for creaturely life, it must as such be already related to creaturely life. For Barth, this relatedness without which *historia praeveniens* would not be *gratia praeveniens* [prevenient grace] is given in the fact that, in the being of

[58] The category 'outwardly' (*ad extra*) which Barth employs following the older theology, is a hermeneutical aid, which itself needs interpretation. God's being cannot be divided up into inner and outer. But the relation of the modes of being in which God's being corresponds to itself must certainly be distinguished from the 'being over against' (Heidegger) in which God makes *his creature* correspond to God, since God also corresponds to himself in the connection of that relation to this being over against.

[59] *CD* II/2, p. 175.

[60] Cf. ibid., p. 104; cf. also *CD* IV/1, pp. 50 and 60, and *CD* IV/2, pp. 31f.

[61] *CD* II/2, p. 184. In his essay 'Zur Prädestinationslehre Karl Barths', in *Heilsgeschehen und Welt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1965), p. 131, G. Gloege develops the christological *prae* as the formal principle of Barth's doctrine of election. Gloege's objections are directed against this *prae*, which leaves 'a remnant of stability in the concepts of God and revelation' (ibid., p. 113), and leads to making the person of Jesus Christ into a 'principle' (ibid., p. 102). Barth himself stated that he had no intention of thinking of God's being in act without 'stability', in his criticism of Peter Barth's thesis of the actuality of predestination (without its christological grounding) (cf. ibid., pp. 188f.). Barth wanted 'to be very careful not to press the dynamic case against the static' (ibid., p. 187). Cf. Barth's differentiation from the one-sidedly 'dynamic' Reformed federal theology in *CD* IV/1, p. 56. Barth moves beyond the alternative 'static/dynamic' and also the alternative ontology/personalism. The strong language of 'making Jesus' person into a principle' may be taken *ad absurdam* through Barth's understanding of election as 'an act of the divine life in the Spirit'.

Jesus Christ who is in the beginning with God, that is, in that primal history, God determines himself to be God *as man*. In this sense God's self-determination is his 'self-giving' fulfilled 'in His eternal purpose'.[62] The 'eternal divine predestination[63] consists precisely in the fact that in his self-determining God gave his own Son. 'God determined to give and to send forth His Son. God determined to speak His Word. The beginning in which the Son became obedient to the Father was with Himself.'[64] The fact that 'God has elected fellowship with man for Himself [God]' in order to elect 'fellowship with himself for man'[65] takes place in the obedience of the Son. In this fundamental double sense Jesus Christ, in the *historia praeveniens* of God's election, is 'already, here in origin and from all eternity . . . double predestination'.[66]

This understanding of double predestination is the ground for the unity of Christology and soteriology, and of the doctrines of justification and sanctification in Barth's doctrine of reconciliation. For our context it is important that Barth thinks immediately of double predestination in *concrete* terms, as 'an act of divine life in the Spirit'. The fact that Jesus Christ *is* this double predestination means that God's self-giving is 'a gift . . . made to man' on the basis of a divine self-renunciation, which is 'God's hazarding of His Godhead and power and status'.[67] *Praedestinatio gemina* [double predestination] is *praedestinatio dialectica* [dialectical predestination].[68] In Jesus Christ God ordained life for man, but death for himself.[69] The dialectic, however, is not sealed up as a paradox but broken open teleologically: 'God wills to lose in order that man may

[62] *CD* II/2, p. 161.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., p. 162.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Cf. H. Vogel, 'Praedestinatio gemina. Die Lehre von der ewigen Gnadenwahl', in E. Wolf (ed.), *Theologische Aufsätze. Karl Barth zum 50. Geburtstag* (Munich: Kaiser, 1936), pp. 222ff.
[69] *CD* II/2, p. 167.

gain.'[70] Barth's doctrine of election is already drawn up with reference to the doctrine of justification.[71]

For the *being* of God, this means the 'threat of negation'.[72] In Jesus Christ God himself is affected *from the beginning* and therefore once for all by the *No* expressed in the justification of the sinner together with the *Yes* to humanity. If the result of this for humanity is the consolation that the 'rejection cannot again become the portion or affair of man',[73] the result for God is the threat: 'In God's eternal purpose it is God Himself who is rejected in His Son.'[74] But since in the *historia praeveniens* the Son of God is already in covenant with the *lost* son of man,[75] God in his eternal being takes seriously the 'threat of negation'. In precisely this way God maintains to the end his *Yes* to himself as his *Yes* to humanity. And precisely in this, God's being *remains* in *becoming*.

The becoming in which God's being remains is no μέσον [mean] between non-being and being, participating in both. Rather, God's being in becoming excludes non-being as that which is not willed by God. And only as that which is excluded by God does non-being have its own 'autonomy and status' at all, namely, that of the 'being and essence' excluded from God's economy and so rejected; only thus does it possess 'the

[70] Ibid., p. 162.

[71] Nevertheless, Barth understands justification precisely from the viewpoint of election as God's self-justification. For God's choice 'from all eternity . . . to take to Himself and to bear man's rejection is a prior justification of God in respect of the risk' to which he resolved to expose man by confronting him with nothingness and sin (ibid., p. 165). Barth's understanding of justification as God's self-justification relates to the interpretation which has recently been advocated by E. Käsemann in antithesis to Bultmann, that Paul's concept of the righteousness of God, to be understood out of the apocalyptic tradition, primarily denotes God's power and therefore God's gift: 'Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 58 (1961), pp. 367ff.

[72] *CD* II/2, p. 163.

[73] Ibid., p. 167.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Cf. ibid., p. 164: Barth uses the concept 'son of man', not in the sense of the apocalyptic tradition of the Old and New Testaments, but in the sense of patristic Christology.

autonomy and status of the non-being'.[76] But in that God's being has its ontological place in becoming, God's being *can* encounter non-being, abandon itself to it and in such abandonment establish itself as *suffering* being. The prevenience of the divine being in the primal history of the eternal covenant in its very prevenience already has as its goal direct confrontation with *lost* humanity, and in this confrontation an encounter with death. There the *triumph* of the grace of God takes place.[77] God's encounter with death takes place in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, hell, death and the devil are defeated. But in that as Jesus Christ is already with God in the beginning, from eternity God also *precedes* non-being,[78] and from the very beginning it is true that Jesus is victor.

3. In choosing death for himself God chooses life for us. But life is existence in fellowship with God. In Jesus Christ God has elected humanity to such fellowship. And since Jesus Christ

[76] Ibid., p. 170.

[77] G. C. Berkouwer's fine book *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) raises a protest against this 'attempt to comprehend the incarnation' (p. 307). If we dispute the confrontation of God's *prevenient* being with non-being, we must also dispute Barth's thesis that the Christian has to undertake the confrontation of non-being (as nothingness) by demythologising it in 'an act of unbelief which is grounded in faith' (*CD* III/3, p. 521; cf. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace*, pp. 376f.). The less one wants to bring God in relation to suffering, the more intensely one will emphasise human suffering. On the other hand, the more radically one thinks 'theopaschitically' that 'God tasted Himself . . . damnation, death and hell' (*CD* II/2, p. 164), the more radically can the existence of the justified man Jesus be understood. 'In Jesus Christ we see and know this whole sphere of evil as something which has already been overcome, something which yields, something which has been destroyed by the positive will of God's overflowing glory. And what it is in Jesus Christ it is also in the beginning with God' (ibid., p. 172; cf. the discussion with Berkouwer, *CD* IV/3, pp. 173ff.

[78] These statements about divine prevenience could give the impression that God was obliged to reveal himself. In fact, the very opposite is the case. God's prevenience is grace, an act of his freedom. In his prevenience he is 'before' anything which he is obligated to do. But in this very way he is *for* humanity and *against* nothingness. He thus wills to reveal himself, not on the basis of an obligation, but because he obligates himself as *the one who loves in freedom*. Barth wants as little to speak of a *potentia Dei absoluta* [absolute divine power] as he does of a *potentia Dei ordinata* [ordained divine power] understood as a compulsion to revelation (cf., e.g., *CD* IV/3, p. 227, and corresponding statements in all volumes of the *CD*).

is the event of the double choice of God, the man Jesus, too, is already with God in the beginning in the primal history of the eternal covenant.

This assertion in Barth's doctrine of election sets great difficulties before anyone seeking to understand it. For how should we understand the 'being of Christ in the beginning with God'?[79] The fact that this statement follows from the starting-point of Barth's doctrine of election is nevertheless clear. If that primal history is to be real *history* between God and humanity, then the Son of God cannot be thought of in this history without the man Jesus, and the eternal λόγος [Word] cannot be thought of as λόγος ἄσαρκος [Word without flesh]. If in this history God is *already* with humanity, then for its part humanity must *already* be with God. As grace, God's prevenient being is being which *imparts* itself. In the sense of such prevenient impartation, the man Jesus already *has* a share in God's eternal being.

Barth's interpretation of John 1.1f. can help in understanding the being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God. Barth understands the λόγος who was with God in the beginning as a 'stop-gap' for Jesus.[80] The λόγος has the function of keeping the place with God which is to be Jesus'. 'ὁ λόγος is unmistakably substituted for Jesus. His is the place which the predicates attributed to the logos are meant at once to mark off, to clear and to reserve.'[81] 'The force of the threefold ἦν [was] in John 1.1 is more than axiomatic. It points to an eternal happening and to a temporal: to an eternal in the form of time, and to a temporal with the content of eternity.'[82] The *event*-character of the λόγος, however, is nothing other than the spoken *character* 'of the Word which was in the beginning with God and which belongs to God'.[83] And this Word is called Jesus. 'It is of this name that we speak.'[84] '[W]e have no need to project anything

[79] *CD* II/2, p. 107.
[80] Ibid., p. 96.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid., p. 97.
[83] Ibid., p. 98.
[84] Ibid.

into eternity',[85] but eternity is planned around this Jesus. And in virtue of this plan in the eternal counsel of God the man Jesus *is* in the beginning with God.

This pre-existent being of the man Jesus should not be interpreted as a 'gnoseological' or 'ideal' being. And this being 'does not belong only passively to the *aeterna Dei praedestinatio* [eternal divine predestination]'[86] as Aquinas taught.[87] The being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God consists rather in the spoken character of the eternal λόγος: Jesus. And here also it is true that 'he spoke, and it came to be' (Ps. 33.9). In that the electing God has spoken his electing *Yes* to this man, this man *is* this *Yes*. He is this not *Yes* for himself. For himself he is nothing at all. But he *is* this *Yes* with God.

If I have understood correctly this decisive locus of Barth's doctrine of election, then the being of the man Jesus with God is to be understood in the sense of the doctrine of the *enhypostasis* and *anhypostasis*[88] of the human nature of Jesus Christ. Barth himself does not explicitly employ this doctrine in connection with the doctrine of election. But if the being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God is not to be understood in the sense of a projection of a temporal existence into eternity, then we must speak of this temporal existence of Jesus in the sense of the *anhypostasis*. Jesus' existence would not be what it is if it were not *already* in the 'eternal decision of God by which time is founded and governed'.[89] But it is precisely in the eternal decision of God in the sense of the *enhypostasis* that this existence really is *temporal* existence. As he who 'by nature is God',[90] the *man* Jesus is in the beginning with God. In this way he *corresponds* as elect man to the God who elects, and

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., p. 107.

[87] *STh* III.24.1f.

[88] The term *enhypostasis* signifies that the human nature of Jesus subsists in the divine Word; *anhypostasis* signifies that Jesus' human nature is not self-subsistent [tr].

[89] *CD* II/2, p. 99.

[90] Ibid., p. 96.

in unity with the Son of God is '*in concreto* and not *in abstracto*, Jesus Christ'.[91]

One question to this thoroughly christological interpretation of predestination is not to be suppressed, precisely because of its stringency: If in Jesus Christ election is really to be understood as history between God and humanity, then must we not speak of *faith*, too, along with the being of the man Jesus, as in the beginning with God? If the election of Jesus Christ is understood as an act of the divine life of the *Spirit*, must not then faith as the work of the Holy Spirit also be spoken of along with the election of Jesus Christ? If Jesus Christ, who is already in the beginning with God as 'the authentic witness of the mercy in which God in choosing man for fellowship with Himself turns towards him His own glory', is 'the original pattern of the believer',[92] must we not then also speak of the being of Jesus Christ with God in the beginning as one who through the *Spirit* grants faith? Is not the danger of the *decretum absolutum* only

[91] Ibid., p. 98. Barth's teaching concerning the being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God is, indeed, the christological counterpart to the *theologia naturalis* [natural theology] which he radically rejected. Whereas Barth always denied the priority of God's being in the beginning with humanity in creation over revelation (which is only to be understood christologically), he now teaches, on the basis of the priority of revelation (of covenant) which he always maintained, the being of a man in the beginning with God, which precedes creation: that is, the being of the elect man Jesus. In this, Barth has in some measure christologically surpassed the conception of all natural theology. One can hardly any longer make the charge Barth's rejection of any natural theology withheld from humanity the theological significance which is its due. Equally, Barth's doctrine of the being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God may also be understood as a Reformed counterpart to Lutheran teaching about the participation of the human nature of Jesus Christ in the omnipresence of the *logos incarnatus* [incarnate word]. Cf. *CD* IV/2, p. 81, where Barth describes it as inadequate to speak of 'a divinisation of human essence in Jesus Christ', and instead, brings the doctrine of the *communicatio gratiarum* [communication of graces], which includes the proper concern of the *communicatio idiomatum* [communication of properties], to its rightful place as an indication of the 'fulness of the concretion' which, in the 'movement which is made to human essence', is God's 'event' (ibid., pp. 84f.). If the christological aphorism is grounded in the Lutheran doctrine of justification, the Reformed aphorism emerges from the doctrine of predestination. In both cases we are dealing with aphorisms. We need to discover what is lost if we blunt the sharpness of either statement.

[92] *CD* II/2, p. 198.

really banished in favour of a *decretum concretum* [concrete decree] when we also speak of the faith which *comes* to humanity along with the election of Jesus Christ (while then, in the doctrine of *reconciliation*, faith must be treated as that which *has come* to humanity [cf. Gal. 3.25])? This would not have to happen in the sense of the Lutheran doctrine of *fides praevisa* [foreseen faith] – which Barth rejected –[93] which would compel us to understand predestination as *pars providentiae* [part of providence]. But may we not 'take in all seriousness this deriving of *praevisa fides* from the grace of the Holy Spirit and therefore from the will of God'?[94] And in such a way would not God's 'being-in-act' already be understood in the election of Jesus Christ as a being in the act of the Spirit who makes faith possible? Precisely in this way a Pelagian understanding of faith would be resisted. And in the same way we would establish the fact that for elected humanity, too, God's being is a being-in-becoming.[95]

(c) God's passion

God's being-in-act becomes manifest in the temporal history of Jesus Christ. The temporal history of Jesus Christ is the fulfilment in time of God's eternal resolve. The fulfilment in time of God's eternal resolve is God's existence as man in Jesus Christ. God's existence as man is not only God's existence as creature, but equally God's handing of himself over to the opposition to God which characterises human existence. The consequence of God's self-surrender is his *suffering* of the opposition to God which afflicts human existence in opposition to God – even to *death* on the cross.

In this sense also, God's being is in becoming. It is a being in a *becoming* threatened by *perishing*. For humanity in opposition to God is condemned to perish. And in the existence of Jesus Christ God suffers this very condemnation. 'The more seriously

[93] Ibid., pp. 72ff.

[94] Ibid., pp. 73f.

[95] This critical inquiry goes back to a paper presented by Wolfgang Hering to my seminar on Barth's doctrine of election in the summer semester, 1963.

we take this, the stronger becomes the temptation to approximate to the view of a contradiction and conflict in God Himself.'[96] Barth takes the passion of God very seriously. 'The Almighty exists and acts and speaks here in the form of One who is weak and impotent, the eternal as One who is temporal and perishing . . . The One who lives for ever has fallen a prey to death. The Creator is subjected to and overcome by the onslaught of that which is not.'[97] But he categorically rejects that we must draw from this the consequence of a contradiction through which God would come into conflict with himself.[98] For Barth *this* consequence is blasphemy. However, his rejection of this consequence does *not* lead to any toning down of his discussion of God's suffering, but, conversely, to a critique of the traditional metaphysical concept of God, according to which God cannot suffer without falling into conflict with his being.[99] In this critique, Barth's opposition to every kind of natural theology received its most pointed statement. No concept of God arrived at independent of the reality of Jesus Christ may decide what is possible and impossible for God. Rather, we are to say from what God as man in Jesus Christ is, does and suffers: 'God can do this'.[100] For 'who God is and what it is to be divine

[96] *CD* IV/1, p. 185.

[97] Ibid., p. 176.

[98] Ibid., p. 185: 'God gives Himself, but He does not give Himself away. He does not give up being God in becoming a creature, in becoming man. He does not cease to be God. He does not come into conflict with Himself.'

[99] Cf. the discussion in W. Elert, *Der Ausgang der altkirchlichen Christologie* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1957), which needs to be furthered. A very thought-provoking 'hypothetical myth' about the *suffering being* of God is told by Hans Jonas, 'Unsterblichkeit und heutige Existenz', in *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1963), pp. 44ff. The appendix makes public an exchange of letters between Jonas and Bultmann about this 'myth'. W. Weischedel's philosophical reflections in 'Philosophische Theologie im Schatten des Nihilismus', *Evangelische Theologie* 22 (1962), pp. 233ff., appear, by contrast, to lead to the idea that 'God', as the essence of the power which plunges everything into weakness, is *suffered*, a suffering in which humanity must suffer taking leave of God 'with a gesture of resignation' (pp. 248f.). Over against this, theology can only speak kerygmatically of the suffering of *God* (as a farewell to the isolation of questioning which has already taken place).

[100] *CD* IV/1, p. 187.

is something we have to learn where God has revealed Himself and His nature, the essence of the divine. . . . It is not for us to speak of a contradiction and rift in the being of God, but to learn to correct our notions of the being of God, to reconstitute them in the light of the fact that He does this. We may believe that God can and must only be absolute in contrast to all that is relative, exalted in contrast to all that is lowly, active in contrast to all suffering, inviolable in contrast to all temptation, transcendent in contrast to all immanence, and therefore divine in contrast to everything human, in short that He can and must be only the "Wholly Other". But such beliefs are shown to be quite untenable, and corrupt and pagan, by the fact that God does in fact be and do this in Jesus Christ.'[101]

Thus it is not a contradiction of the definition of God's being as 'being-in-act' when suffering is predicated of God. God's suffering corresponds to his being-in-act. But God's suffering is his being-in-*act*; thus 'from the very first' God's 'passion' is to be understood as 'the divine action'.[102] It is therefore no paradox when we also speak of 'God's being in the act of suffering'. This statement would be a paradox if in his essence God were a god incapable of suffering, as was sometimes maintained in the early church, following the metaphysical concept of God in Greek philosophy.[103] On the basis of Barth's inference from God's being revealed to his 'inner' being, we shall have to understand, *in* God himself, too, God's 'being-in-act' which corresponds to the passion of the Son of God, as in a certain sense a *passive* being – passive in the sense of

[101] Ibid., p. 186; see also pp. 129, 177. Cf. earlier *CD* I/2, p. 31: 'Not only what is impossible with us men, but also what must rightly appear to us impossible with God Himself, is possible with God', because, indeed, it has become a reality to us. Cf. also *CD* IV/2, pp. 84f.: with the help of a presupposed philosophical concept of God, 'the pride of man' denied in 'all earlier Christology' the ontological implications of God's passion, since, according to that concept of God, 'God was far too exalted for . . . His incarnation . . . to mean anything at all for Himself, or in any way to affect His Godhead'.

[102] *CD* IV/1, p. 254.

[103] Cf. on this the interesting reflections of W. Elert on the axiom of apatheia in patristic Christology: *Der Ausgang der altkirchlichen Christologie*, esp. p. 132.

obedience. This passivity of obedience in God is also the highest form of activity in so far as it is *affirmed* passivity. It belongs 'to the inner *life* [my italics] of God that there should take place within it obedience'.[104] In the obedience of the Son of God to the Father, the unity of the being of God is not jeopardised through the Son's inferiority to the Father,[105] but the unity of the divine being is *concrete* precisely, indeed, in its 'modes of being which cannot be separated, which cannot be autonomous, but which cannot cease to be different. He is God in their concrete relationships the one to the other, in the history which takes place between them.'[106]

The unity of being in which God 'in himself . . . is both One who is obeyed and Another who obeys'[107] distinguishes God's 'being-in-act' from a being which is to be understood as 'a divine death'.[108] Precisely because obedience from eternity is not strange to the life of God, and precisely because this being is utterly other than a 'divine death', God *can* suffer and die as man. This innertrinitarian *ability* of God must not, however, be thought of as a transcendental condition of possibility for the passion of God in Jesus Christ.[109] Rather, God's ability means that God is *Lord*. 'The image, the correspondence in which He has set it up and revealed it among us, for our salvation, for the reconciliation of the world with God, is, however, His obedience in humility.'[110]

In this obedience God suffers, in that in Jesus Christ he exists as man. And in this obedience God abandons himself to death.

[104] *CD* IV/1, p. 201.

[105] For the being of God, subordination does not mean inferiority, deficiency or lack. Correspondingly, in the created realm, subordination ought not to mean 'being something less'; cf. ibid., p. 202.

[106] Ibid., p. 203.

[107] Ibid., p. 201.

[108] Ibid., p. 561.

[109] Barth's entire theology is a protest against transcendental questioning in theology, as his understanding of revelation as God's *self*-interpretation shows in axiomatic fashion. This is also highly significant for Barth's understanding and use of analogy.

[110] *CD* IV/1, p. 208.

Passion and death are not a metaphysical piece of misfortune which overtook the Son of God who became man.[111] God *chose* this 'fate'. In his passion and death he did not therefore somehow waive 'His deity (as did the Japanese Emperor in 1945)', but was rather 'in this humiliation . . . supremely God . . . in this death . . . supremely alive', so that 'He has maintained and revealed His deity in the passion of this man as His eternal Son'.[112] And so God *as God* has declared himself identical with the crucified Jesus. Therefore one must not exclude from this suffering the Father who gave his Son over to suffer death. 'It is not at all the case that God has no part in the suffering of Jesus Christ even in His mode of being as the Father.'[113] 'This fatherly fellow-suffering of God' is rather 'the basis of the humiliation of His Son', in that in the giving up of his Son God suffers 'the alien suffering of the creature, of man, which he takes to Himself in Him'.[114] Indeed, God's fatherly fellow-suffering as 'the basis of the humiliation of his Son' is 'the truth of that which takes place historically in His crucifixion'.[115]

Thus the Father, too, participates with the Son in the passion, and the divine unity of God's modes of being proves itself in the suffering of Jesus Christ. God's being *is* a being in the act of suffering. But even in suffering God's being *remains* a being in *act*, a being in *becoming*. God persists in the historicality of his being. And this persistence of God in the *historicality* of his being allows this being to remain even in death a being in *becoming*. In giving himself away God does not give himself up. But he gives himself away because he will not give up humanity.

[111] 'Even if the separation is only brief/I still feel the misfortune deeply', laments the widow of a cook at the Prussian royal court in the words of a Berlin tombstone.

[112] *CD* IV/1, pp. 246f.

[113] *CD* IV/2, p. 357.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid. J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 203, tries to reproach Barth for the fact that in expounding the event of the cross he employs 'a simple concept of God' without 'trinitarian differentiation'; against this, we are, according to Moltmann, to say 'The Son suffers and dies on the cross. The Father suffers with him, but not in the same way' (ibid.). Thus Moltmann, as he believes, against Barth. That is too much.

The Son of God who is united with the Son of Man, the Son of God as man, is certainly *dead.* This dead man cannot make himself alive. Here Barth thinks in strictly anti-docetic terms. That even in death God's being *remains* a being in becoming is not the work of the Son of God who died as man.[116] But God's being remains a being-in-*act* only in the constantly new acts of *God's self-affirmation.* And so God's persistence in his historicality in the face of the death of Jesus Christ is a new act also. In the face of the death of the Son of God who died as man, 'God's being *remains* in becoming' means the *new*[117] act of the resurrection, which happens to the Son of God and with him to the man Jesus. In saying *Yes* to the dead Son of God, God also said *Yes* to humanity, indeed, with the *same Yes.* In that here *God corresponds to himself* anew, he also brings *humanity* anew into *correspondence with God.* For in the resurrection of Jesus Christ humanity is given a share in the being of God which asserts itself against death. But as grace this *sharing,* too, belongs to God's being-in-act. And so it belongs to the God's *being* to *become* the God of every person.[118]

[116] *CD* IV/1, pp. 309f.: the death of the Son of God ought not to be understood only as powerlessness 'from which He recovered on His own initiative and in His own strength' (against Heinrich Vogel, *Gott in Christo* [Berlin: Lettner, 1951], p. 739). O. Weber clearly perceived the difficulties of traditional Christology in respect of the death of Jesus: *Foundations of Dogmatics* II, pp. 106ff. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace,* p. 307, sees in the fact that Barth does not speak 'unqualifiedly of the "death of God"' 'a remarkable circumstance (symptomatic of the recoil!) which is hardly understandable in terms of his premises'.

[117] In this the Christian doctrine of God is necessarily distinguished from such an impressive philosophical outline as that set out by H. Jonas in his 'hypothetical myth', where there is also an attempt at radical formulation of God's historicality. But the concept of God in this 'hypothetical myth' is not the Christian concept. God's being is not formulated in a trinitarian way. It is thus strictly consistent that the historicality of this 'God' becomes concrete in his 'self-denial', from which no *new* act of *God* can follow: 'After he gave himself completely to the world in its becoming, God has nothing more to give; now it is for humanity to give to him' (*Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit,* p. 60).

[118] The fact that God's being is a being *pro nobis* [for us] which makes him present *in nobis* [in us] is grounded in the historicality of God's *extra nos esse* [being outside us]. Cf. K. Barth, 'Extra nos – pro nobis – in nobis', in H. Gollwitzer (ed.), *Hören und Handeln* (Munich: Kaiser, 1962), pp. 15ff.; on this, see my study 'Karl Barths Lehre von der Taufe', in *Barth-Studien* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1982), pp. 246–90.

(d) God's being is in becoming

At the end of this paraphrase we will briefly confront Barth's talk of God's being with Gollwitzer's talk of the existence of God as confessed by faith. The confrontation will, on the one hand, be restricted to the unsolved difficulty in Gollwitzer's book, which may be formulated in the following question: How is God's being in and for itself, which Gollwitzer maintains, related to God's being for us, which Gollwitzer also maintains, and which provides the basis for the assertion that God's being is a being in and for itself? On the other hand, the confrontation will take the form of a summary – certainly rather sketchy – of the preceding paraphrase. In this way, various sides of the same problem will be discussed, so that there will necessarily be some repetition.

Gollwitzer maintained that we must not 'evade or shrink from saying: "*God is in and for himself.*"'[119] This proposition should not be understood 'as a speculative proposition', but rather as expressive of 'an indispensable element in the knowledge of faith'.[120] For the aim of the proposition is to prevent the identification of God's being with God's being for us, in order firmly to establish and maintain that 'in God's being-for-us man receives a free, unmerited gift ... which is not based upon anything that is necessary to God. ...'[121]

Expressed in the concepts of classical ontology this means that, as the one who exists concretely, God is a primary substance. For it is characteristic of so-called primary substances as such that as such they are not necessarily related to something other. Primary substances as such are not πρός τι [relative] and they are certainly not to be conceived as relational, whether as wholes or as parts: ἐπὶ μὲν γὰρ τῶν πρώτων οὐσιῶν ἀληθές ἐστιν · οὔτε γὰρ τὰ ὅλα οὔτε τὰ μέρη πρός τι λέγεται [the view we refer to holds good of the primary substance, for neither the wholes nor the parts of primary substances are ever

[119] H. Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God*, p. 217.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.

relative].[122] If, on the other hand, we sought to conceive the being of God as relational, then the being of the other to which God was to be related would necessarily be proposed along with the being of God. For all relational being, in so far as it is specified according to its own peculiarity, requires the other to which it is related in reciprocal fashion: πάντα οὖν τὰ πρός τι, ἐάνπερ οἰκείως ἀποδιδῶται, πρὸς ἀντιστρέφοντα λέγεται [thus all relatives are referred to their correlatives, provided they are rightly defined].[123] Thus if one would wish to conceive of God's being as such under the category of relational being, and if one had to regard humanity as the other to which God as God is related, then God could not be conceived as God without humanity; conversely, God would then always have to be brought to speech with the concept[124] of humanity. It is just this that Gollwitzer wants to prevent.[125] Now it certainly ought not to be denied that God has *turned* himself *towards* humanity, that he *is* really *for us*. The fact that God's being is *also* relational being is for Gollwitzer not in question. But God's relatedness to humanity is not a necessary attribute of the being of God. Rather, God's relation to humanity is a contingent relation which must make problematic God's being in and for itself. In his definition as God, God is not then necessarily related (πρὸς αὐτὸ ὃ λέγεται) to humanity but only ἐάν γε πρὸς τὸ τυχὸν ἀποδιδῶται,[126] that is, contingently. And just for this reason God and humanity do not make reciprocal demands on each other, for if it refers to what is contingent – not to what is necessary – the relation is not reciprocal (ἐπεί ἐάν γε

[122] *Categories* 8a.15f., a writing attributed to Aristotle, of doubtful authenticity; if it is authentic, it must be very early.

[123] *Categories* 7a.22f.

[124] In the strict sense of the phrase λόγος της οὐσίας.

[125] Cf. W. Joest, 'Die Personalität des Glaubens', *Kerygma und Dogma* 7 (1961), p. 152: God 'does not become in the human Thou, but he is'. See also G. Hasenhüttl, *Der Glaubensvollzug* (Essen: Ludgerus-Verlag, 1963), p. 320: 'As much as one can agree with what has been said, in my opinion too much is proven.'

[126] Whereby for Gollwitzer (over against Aristotle) the πρὸς τὸ τυχὸν, according to which God's being would be defined here, must be the consequence of a divine decision.

πρὸς τὸ τυχὸν ἀποδιδῶται καὶ μὴ πρὸς αὐτὸ ὃ λέγεται, οὐκ ἀντιστρέφει).[127]

Gollwitzer's conception of God's being is thus thoroughly in line with the classical concept of substance.[128] However, he does not consciously make use of this concept. What is crucial for Gollwitzer is to conceive of God's being as person-being. 'The personal way of speaking is unsurpassable for Christian talk of God.'[129] But: 'Personal being means being in relationship!'[130] And: 'It must therefore be emphatically maintained that person is a concept expressing relationship, or at any rate it may be used theologically only as a concept of relationship and not as a concept of substance expressing the nature of *a magnitude existing for itself.*'[131] On the other hand, however, 'we must not evade or shrink from saying: God is in and for himself'.[132]

The dilemma which arises here is obvious. It ought to be countered 'through the distinction between God's being for us which flows from the freedom of his being for himself, and a being for our sake in which God is only thought of in a functional sense, since he cannot like worldly entities be demonstrated in objective independence'.[133] God is thus not to be thought of 'only in a functional sense', although God's being can be conceived only as 'personal being', and 'personal being', according to Gollwitzer, 'may be used, at any rate

[127] *Categories* 7a.23f.

[128] In Aristotle, the 'classical concept of substance' is tendered in the category of οὐσία. But what later becomes a more familiar and so more classical term is in Aristotle still an *attempt at reflection.* In the *Categories*, the concept of οὐσία is by no means already polished, but rather (on the presupposition of an early date for the text) a first attempt to establish a differentiation from Plato (namely, the attempt to conceive of presence primarily as quiddity and only secondarily as quality). Further attempts will follow, as shown above all by *Metaphysics* Z. Cf. M. Heidegger, 'Metaphysics as History of Being', in *The End of Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1973), and E. Tugendhat, TI KATA TINOΣ (Freiburg: Alber, 1958).

[129] Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God*, p. 188.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., p. 187 (my italics).

[132] Ibid., p. 217.

[133] Ibid., p. 232.

theologically, only as a concept of relationship'. Gollwitzer's remarks demand a clarification of the concept of relation with the help of which it is supposed to make an adequate conception of the being of God.

If God's 'being for us' is not to be a 'being for our sake', then we must ask how God's being for us *can* be thought of as a relation, without God being thought of 'only in a functional sense'. If one concedes the necessity of this distinction, then the question of the *relation* between God's being for us and the freedom of his being for himself becomes even more pressing. We should make no mistake: if we do not conceptualise this *relation*, then revelation as revelation remains unconceptualised. Here the reference to the 'groundless mercy'[134] of God cannot be the last word, because theologically it has significance only in so far as it excludes a ground for God's mercy 'external' to God himself.[135] However, if God's unfathomable mercy does not have its ground in God's *being*, then the concept of mercy is no longer a concept of God. This consequence is very far from Gollwitzer's intention. But can he be spared it when he insists upon his distinction between the essence and the will of God?[136]

It is clear that this distinction of Gollwitzer's is also meant in an anti-metaphysical sense. But is not a gap left in the metaphysical background of God's being precisely through this distinction, which will only allow theological legitimacy to speech about the essence of the will of God? Does not precisely this distinction and limitation prevent us from thinking of God's being in a thoroughly historical way? Must we not *think* of the very *freedom* of God's being for himself on the basis of the revealed *grace* of God's being for us, and, indeed, in such a way that God's being can become event in the grace of God's being for us because in the freedom of his being for himself God's being is originally event?

[134] Ibid., p. 217.
[135] *CD* IV/1, p. 184.
[136] Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God*, p. 186.

If, like Gollwitzer, we wish to maintain and think of God's independence, we cannot avoid the task of conceiving God's independence [*Selbständigkeit*] *out of* God's own subsistence [*Selbstand*] and thus also of thinking of *this subsistence.* Certainly God's subsistence is to be thought of *only* out of God's revelation, and therefore out of an event in which God's being has become manifest as being for us. But in that case one cannot think of God's being as subsistence in the sense in which Plato conceives οὐσία [being], to which he ascribes this definition [λόγος τοῦ εἶναι] : ἀεὶ . . . ὃ ἔστι, μονοειδὲς ὂν αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό (which Schleiermacher translates 'in and for itself'), ὡσαύτως καὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχει καὶ οὐδέποτε οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς ἀλλοίωσιν οὐδεμίαν ἐνδέχεται [Does absolute essence, since it is uniform and exists by itself, remain the same and never in any way admit of any change?].[137] This kind of being as subsistence excludes *event* from itself; such an independent being cannot reveal itself. The subsistence of being as idea excludes the event of revelation because it excludes the *event* of being as subsistence. The statement 'God is in and for himself' remains, therefore, open to serious misunderstanding as long as its assertion of divine independence is not formulated on the basis of the event of revelation, in such a way that thereby God's being as subsistence allows the event of revelation to be conceived from this being.

But if God's being as subsistence is thought of in such a way that this being makes the event of revelation not impossible but first and foremost possible, then God's being as subsistence, thought of on the basis of the event of God's revelation, is itself thought of as event – and, indeed, as an event which *grants* the event of revelation. God's independent being

[137] *Phaedo* 78d. Over against Plato, Barth makes a distinction within the concept of the divine being, so that he can think of this being both as self-subsistence and as event: God can be other without becoming another. 'In Himself He is quite different from what He is in our work [sc. in the knowledge of God] . . . Yet while this is true, it is also true that both in Himself and in our work He is not another' (*CD* II/1, p. 227). Without being transformed into something else, he is, *in another way,* the *same* for us as he is for himself.

must thus be understood from the event of revelation as an event which grants this event of revelation. God's being as subsistence is self-movement. As self-movement God's independent being makes revelation possible. As God's self-interpretation, revelation as God's interpretation of himself is the expression of this self-movement of the being of God. Formulated differently: The grace of God's being for us must be *able* to 'copy' [*abbilden*] the freedom of God's being-for-himself, so that, as the 'original' [*Urbild*] of that grace, this freedom becomes visible in grace as the 'copy' of this freedom. If revelation as God's *being* for us is to be taken seriously, then in Jesus Christ God's being must *become* visible and *be able* to become visible. This means, however, that both this becoming and this capacity to become must be understood from God's being itself, if indeed it is really true that *God* has revealed *himself*. And, on the other hand, God's being must be thought with regard to this becoming and capacity if it is true that God has *revealed* himself. Thus we must in any event formulate God's *historicality*.

Yet what good is the assertion that one must speak historically of God's being, if one *cannot* speak historically of God's being? It is not achieved by ascribing historical predicates to the concept of God. 'History' and 'the being of God' are then once again all too easily allowed to divide from one another. God's being is only really conceived historically when God's being as such is conceived as historical being.

In such a conception, however, it is crucial that history does not in any way become a generic term for the being of God. 'God's being is historical' is a proposition of revelation, and must remain so. As a proposition of revelation, this statement is itself certainly an historical statement. For revelation is an historical event or it is simply not revelation. But revelation is that historical event in which God's being manifests itself as a being which does not merely tolerate, but actually demands, historical predicates. In the historical event of revelation God's being is itself event, and indeed in such a way that *human* language (and therefore also 'anthropomorphic'

language, for human language, even the most abstract – certainly unknown to itself – is 'anthropomorphic')[138] about God becomes not only appropriate, but necessary.[139]

Far from veiling the fact, this necessity makes manifest that human speech as such is not fitted to speak about God. The fact that God's being demands historical predicates does not cover up but uncovers the truth that historical predicates as such are not fitted to predicate the being of God. But if, however, it is valid that the being of God not only must but also can be spoken about historically, then God's being must be historical in a more fundamental way than historical predicates are historical.[140]

Barth's understanding of revelation as God's self-interpretation is the systematic attempt to think of God's being in itself as event in such a way that God's being is capable of bearing historical predicates, although they are as such not capable of predicating the being of God. In that God *interprets* himself in revelation, the *reiteration* of God's being occurs with the help of historical predicates. But since this self-interpretation is a reiteration *of the being of God through God*, God's being as such is a being capable of reiteration. As being capable of reiteration, God's being is *event*. For being which is no event can only 'reiterate' itself as tautological identity. God's reiteration is not, however, tautological identity, but indeed *self-interpretation*.

At this point a further reflection is indispensable which makes fully clear that God's being is not only able to bear historical predicates (despite their unsuitability) but also requires them. For if it is true that, on the basis of the reiteration of God's being which has taken place as revelation, God's being is a being capable of reiteration, then it will also have to be true

[138] Cf. B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953).

[139] Gollwitzer shows this well: *The Existence of God*, pp. 142–201.

[140] If one does not think of God's being on the ground of his revelation as already in itself historical, then it is only a short step to the opposite conclusion, thinking of history as revelation, as the becoming of God. And it is then only a short step to letting faith be once again grounded in 'historical facts' as such, which – as Wilhelm Herrmann famously saw – is unethical.

that, on the basis of the self-interpretation of this being which has taken place as revelation, God's being is a being capable of interpretation. Note: capable of reiteration and interpretation by God alone. But it is just this fact – that from eternity God is capable of interpreting himself through himself – which must also be understood. The capacity to bear predicates must belong constitutively to God's historicality. The *capacity* to bear predicates, however, is the *event of the word* which underlies all predications and makes them possible. In this sense it will have to be true that God's being, which has been conceived from the event of revelation, is in itself *verbal*, and in precisely in this way historical. The fact that the Word is in the beginning with God – if this Word is to be the subject of the historical predicate 'Jesus of Nazareth' – is of innertrinitarian relevance.

How are we to understand the assertion that God's being is verbal in itself? God's being is verbal in himself in so far as God says *Yes* to himself. This *Yes* of God to himself constitutes his being as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And at the same time, from the beginning, it constitutes the historicality of God's being, in which all history has its ground. This 'Yes' of God to himself is the *mystery* of God's being and as such one cannot go behind it. For in God's saying 'Yes' to himself, God's being *corresponds* to itself as Father, as Son and as Holy Spirit. This correspondence is absolute mystery and cannot be surpassed by any paradox.

In this correspondence the being of God takes place as the history of the divine life in the Spirit. And in the history which is constituted through this correspondence God *makes space* within himself for *time*. This making-space-for-time within God is a continuing event. The space of time conceived as a continuing event we call eternity. 'God has time because and as He has eternity.'[141] 'We know eternity primarily and properly, not by the negation of the concept of time. . . . The theological concept of eternity must be set free from the Babylonian captivity of an

[141] *CD* II/1, p. 611.

abstract opposite to the concept of time.'[142] This happens when eternity is conceived as the continuing event[143] of making space for time, and thus as God's space of time. In this space of time, God *is*, in that he *goes his* ways. 'To say that God moves in certain directions is not a mere figure of speech, nor is it a reality only in His relation to what He has created. It is an eternal reality in Himself.'[144]

The eternity in which God goes his ways, as the space of time for which God continually make space within himself, is not a-historical but in the utmost sense historical. And because God's being in eternity, constituted through the correspondence of Father, Son and Spirit, is historical, revelation is therefore possible as 'eternity in a single moment'. The mystery of the correspondence of his being which takes place in God's self-affirmation makes revelation possible as historical event, and becomes manifest in this event as mystery.

Single moments do not tarry, but single moments can make history. As 'eternity in a single moment' revelation makes history, in that it brings human being into correspondence with the being of God which corresponds to itself. In just this way, however, human speech about God becomes possible in the 'freedom for the word' (Ernst Fuchs) which is granted by God. It owes itself to revelation in which God himself – and that means his being! – brought himself to speech in a human way. And the historical predicate with which God brought his being to speech in a human way is called Jesus of Nazareth. Even this predicate is not as such fitted to act as a predicate of God's being.[145] It is not as such the predicate of an analytical proposition. What the patristic doctrine of *anhypostasis* said of

[142] Ibid.

[143] God's '*stare* [standing] is the same as his *fluere* [moving], but without the instability that belongs to all creaturely *fluere*, the *fluere* of empirical time. Again, His *fluere* is also a *stare*, but without the immutability that belongs to all creaturely *stare*, the *stare* which is proper to the various times as they become a problem in our reflection on them' (ibid.).

[144] Ibid., p. 593.

[145] In this sense, the question of the historical Jesus, posed again in the school of Bultmann, is much misunderstood.

the human nature of Jesus Christ is true of this predicate as such. 'Jesus of Nazareth' cannot of itself be regarded as a predicate of revelation.[146] But this predicate is *true* as ἐνυπόστατος τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ θεοῦ [enhypostatic in the Word of God].[147] In order that this predicate might be true, God chose it from eternity. Is it too much to assert with Barth that the λόγος [Word], in which alone 'Jesus of Nazareth' can be a predicate of revelation, was already with God in the beginning as the subject of this historical predicate and thus 'the stop gap for Jesus'?[148] With his doctrine of the existence of the man Jesus in the beginning with God, Barth has taught us to understand christologically the relation of the historicality of God's being to historical predicates. As long as we have nothing better with which to replace it, this theologoumenon is something to be treasured.

[146] This is also the position of the great Marburg teacher with respect to the historical Jesus, a position which his pupils, also, have not abandoned. It is, of course, disputable whether one must draw the same consequences from this position as Bultmann himself finally does in his Heidelberg lecture 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus', in C. Braaten and R. Harrisville (eds), *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ* (New York: Abingdon, 1964).

[147] The subject-matter itself becomes plain within Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God in his parables. Cf. above all, Ernst Fuchs, 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus', in *Studies of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 11–31.

[148] The exposition given above of the correspondence of God's being as the history of the divine life in the *Spirit* could provoke the question of whether it would *a priori* exclude from our thinking some sort of divine 'corporeality'. In view, this does not necessarily have to be so. In that God *makes space* for time in his eternal history, one could also speak of God's *corporeality*. It would consist in the fact that God has *space* in his being. Even this, of course, is meaningful only as a statement of revelation. And so Barth talks immediately in concrete, christological terms, with reference to John 1.1, of the Logos as a 'stop-gap' for Jesus. Thus from eternity God's being has *space* for human history. In *making space within himself* for time, he also makes a place for us alongside himself. Talk of God's corporeality in this sense becomes eschatologically relevant in so far as Barth understands the eschatological being of humanity as 'a being which is hidden in God' without its difference from the eternal being of God being thereby abolished (cf. *CD* IV/1, p. 8). One could define matters thus: God's corporeality is the eternal space of time which makes space for participation in God's being, a space of time for which God himself makes room in himself (cf. John 14.2). God's corporeality would thus be the end of all the ways of God, but God's corporeality as the space of the spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν) promised to us, full of life and love.

In attempting to overcome the difficulty into which Gollwitzer's book led us, we have turned to the interpretation of Barth's own statements. We will now have to clarify what these statements mean for the formal task set us by Gollwitzer's book, the task of thinking of God's being as relation.

The fact that God *becomes manifest* means that God's being is relational being. But if the dilemma we have sketched is to be avoided, if God's being is to be conceived as πρός τι [in relation to something] and yet to remain protected from being dependent on the ἕτερον [other] without the relation becoming the accidental property of a substance existing in and for itself, then God's being will have to be understood essentially as *doubly* relational being. This means that God can enter into relation (*ad extra*) with another being (and in this very relation his being can exist ontically, *without* thereby being ontologically dependent on this other being), because God's being (*ad intra*) is a being *related to itself.* The doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to think through the self-relatedness of God's being.[149] This doctrine only thinks through the self-relatedness of the being of God as Father, Son and Spirit fittingly when it understands God's self-relatedness in his modes of being, not as a kind of divine ontological egoism, but rather as the *power* of God's being *to become* the God of another. It must not be made a condition that God's becoming must first take place through 'something other than God', perhaps even in the sense of a transcendental condition of possibility for God being our God.[150] God's self-

[149] In a footnote, Gollwitzer (*The Existence of God*, p. 187 n. 3) points to the possibility of speaking of God's self-relatedness in a trinitarian way: 'God's personal being apart from and before his relation to us could be spoken of only in terms of the relations of the immanent Trinity, as in Barth's exposition.' Rather strangely, Gollwitzer goes no further than this hint, although only the possibility which is indicated here could guard against the problem into which Gollwitzer's book leads. Herbert Braun, of course, would be even less convinced by a doctrine of the immanent Trinity than by Gollwitzer's arguments. On the other hand, it is not obvious why one should abandon pressing those exegetes who employ the historical-critical method to rethink the possibility of the historical-critical method in theology in a thoroughly systematic way on the basis of theology's object.

[150] This danger, however, threatens talk of God's being in and for himself.

relatedness must rather be understood as a *becoming*[151] *proper*[152] to his *own* being, which allows us to conceive God's being as a 'being in act'. Only when God's self-relatedness is understood as a becoming proper to his own being is God's being for us also adequately considered.[153] God's self-relatedness [εἶναι πρὸς

[151] The fact that God's being is in becoming constitutes eternity as temporality in the sense of the three modes of time being in and alongside one another. Thus the becoming which is proper to God's being is not constituted through temporality; rather, temporality is constituted through God's becoming.

[152] If one takes account of the fact that God's being in becoming is a becoming which is *proper* to this being, then one will not be able to distinguish between God's 'existentiality' and his 'concrete actualisation', as Schubert Ogden recommends on the basis of the philosophy of Hartshorne: 'Zur Frage der "richtigen" Philosophie', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 61 (1964), pp. 103ff. According to Ogden, the existentiality of God, which is to be distinguished from his existence, is 'the abstract structure or form of his essence, which characterises him as God and differentiates him from all other essences' (ibid., p. 119). This existentiality of God is 'the ground of each concrete actualisation' (ibid.). Existentiality and concrete actualisation are related as two 'poles' of the divine being. In the one '"pole" of his being God is to the utmost degree subject which transcends conceptual analysis' (ibid., p. 118). The other 'pole' of the divine being is its existentiality, which is therefore the object of a 'phenomenology of the divine being' (ibid., p. 121). Here Heidegger's distinction in fundamental ontology between 'ontic' and 'ontological', between 'existentiell' and 'existential', is applied to the being of God. Characteristic for this is the statement of Hartshorne which Ogden cites: 'Philosophy seeks that general principle or essence of the divine being of which such concrete actions of God are mere contingent illustrations' (ibid., p. 117, citing C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948], p. xii).

Clearly, Barth's outline of trinitarian theology cannot be made to agree with such a 'phenomenology of the divine being'. On Barth's account, it is a matter of understanding 'the other "pole" of the divine being' also as God's being in *becoming*. God's being cannot be considered in abstraction from the becoming proper to his being, just as, conversely, this becoming cannot be understood either as a 'contingent illustration' of the divine being or as something different from the divine being. God's being is as such concrete – that is the point of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which in just this way forbids a 'phenomenology of the divine being'. At least in this negation, Bultmann may stand nearer to Barth than to any philosopher. Cf. Bultmann's statement on Ogden: 'Zur Frage einer "philosophische Theologie"', in K. Oehler (ed.), *Einsichten. Gerhard Krüger zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt/M: Klostermann, 1962), pp. 36ff.

[153] As long as the becoming in which is God's being is understood as the becoming which is *proper* to God's being, the statement 'God's being is in becoming' is safeguarded from the outset from the misunderstanding that God would *become* what he is only through his relation to another than himself. God does not thus first *become* in the faith which he grants. Rather, God does indeed will to become in faith what he

ἑαυτόν] would then be his capacity to be in relation to another [πρὸς ἕτερον]. God's eternal love, in which Father, Son and Holy Spirit become eternally one, would then be the ground of his groundless mercy towards all that is not God. God's being in relation to another is thus no resignation of himself. God's being for us is as little a resignation of himself as it is God's coming to himself.[154]

Thus it is not adequate to conceive of God's being simply as a being in relation. A conscious or unconscious natural theology certainly does not become Protestant by making relation the basic fundamental category of its statements. As 'pure relation', relation is still not conceived adequately as long as this pure form is not thought theologically.[155]

Protestant theology cannot conceive of pure relation without an origin to the relation, which *is*, in that it *sets itself in relation.* Such setting-itself-in-relation is, understood theologically, pure relation. And in the sense of such a setting-itself-in-relation, God's being is *essentially relational*; God's being is 'pure relation'.

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already is. And in this way, in the self-relatedness of his being in becoming, God is already ours in advance. Barth may have given trinitarian precision to Luther's talk of God's *fieri* [becoming]. For Luther, see R. Hermann, 'Das Verhältnis von Rechtfertigung und Gebet', in *Gesammelte Studien zur Theologie Luthers und der Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1960), pp. 16f. n. 14. On the problem of God's becoming, cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', in *Theological Investigations* IV, pp. 105–20, and G. Hasenhüttl, *Der Glaubensvollzug*, pp. 321f.

[154] For Barth, that last statement would be true of Hegel. Cf. *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 420. 'The Church is necessary to God himself, for in it he can be the mind of the Church; and it is this alone which first makes it possible for him to be mind and God. If he were not the mind of the Church he would not be God. And he is God only in so far as he is the mind of the Church. That is the basis of Hegel's confidence in God, and the reason why this confidence can immediately and without further ado be understood as self-confidence as well, and why it did thus understand itself.' See also Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 308 n. 97: 'Without the world God is not God.'

[155] Is purity of relation *philosophically* formulated when relation is thought out of itself, as the later Heidegger evidently seeks to do? See most recently *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays* (New York: Harper, 1977), pp. 3–49.

Pure relation thus means relation as becoming itself, but not from itself.[156] But whence does it become? God's self-relatedness is grounded in God's *Yes* to himself. In this *Yes* of God to himself God sets himself in relation to himself, in this way to be he who he is. In this sense God's being is in becoming. 'Pure relation' can therefore only be the predicate, but never the subject of a statement concerning God. But this predicate can be the predicate of an analytical and a synthetic proposition. In the case of God's trinitarian self-relatedness, this predicate is to be understood as that of an analytical proposition. In the case of God's revelation, this predicate is to be understood as that of a synthetic proposition. The synthetic proposition nevertheless *corresponds* to the analytical proposition. This correspondence means that as self-relatedness God's being is a being in

[156] When we think of 'pure relation' in a sense other than this, it threatens in its purity to become relationlessness. Thus in the trinitarian being of God, too, we are dealing with 'pure relations' only in the sense of relations of origin in which God as Father is the eternal origin of the Son and, with the Son, the eternal origin of the Spirit. *In* these relations of origin, God is who he is. The statement 'God's being is in becoming' must therefore not be confused with statements such as 'God's being is becoming' or 'God's being becomes in becoming'.

Heinrich Vogel (similarly led by the concern to articulate God's being in concrete terms) has interpreted God's selfhood as God's being-as-act, and tried to understand the purity of God's being-as-act *theologically* as God's being for us, manifest in the resurrection of the one who died for us. 'How shall we now want to understand that which takes place there in the mystery of his resurrection as other than pure act!' (*Gott in Christo*, p. 322). With this, 'pure act' is, for Vogel, 'not a *neutral* event, somehow separable from the divine *subject* as it reveals itself in this event' (ibid., p. 321). As the one who is in this event, God is rather '*actus purus*, pure act' (ibid., p. 322). Vogel then defines God's being-as-act through the relations of God's being out of himself and God's being for others.

In Vogel we run up against the same problem which we sought to withstand with the statement 'God's being is in becoming'. What is meant here by 'becoming' is in fact to be understood christologically, and the legitimate ground for such a christological understanding will be in fact the event of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Here it is a matter of a becoming whose subject is God and God alone, and which is, at the same time, the ontological location of the being of the Son of God who died for us. We hardly need to point out that the being of the God 'who did not become' can certainly be *in becoming*, indeed, that only a being which *is* in becoming is properly a being which has not become.

becoming, which possesses the characteristic of being able to *reiterate* itself.[157]

Reiteration, however, is nothing without that which is to be reiterated. That means in Gollwitzer's sense that God's being for us is nothing without God's being for himself. The *ratio essendi* of the reiteration is that which is to be reiterated. The problems which arise in this context must be considered as a counterpart to the doctrines of *enhypostasis* and *anhypostasis* in a doctrine of the reiteration of God's being. What the doctrines of *enhypostasis* and *anhypostasis* highlight christologically in terms of the *relata* [things related], that is, God and humanity, a doctrine of reiteration would have to highlight in terms of the relations, if God's being for us is the reiteration of his being for himself. In this way the doctrine of *anhypostasis* would now be thought together with that of *enhypostasis* by turning the two doctrines against each other: God's being *ad extra* would be anhypostatic if in this relation there did not take place an *enhypostasis* of the being of God as Father, as Son and as Spirit. But in that God in his revelation reiterates his being as Father, as Son, and as Spirit as being for us, this reiteration also possesses

[157] To 'reiterate itself' is something other than to 'reiterate something'. Because in revelation God does not reiterate *something* but *himself*, 'faith, therefore, also understands revelation not as *something* new, but understands it only in that it understands *itself* anew in revelation' (R. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding* [London: SCM Press, 1969], p. 316). Gollwitzer's concern that Bultmann could have forgotten 'that in faith man understands God also anew and that revelation brings him "something new" inasmuch as he did not know God before as the One who is God, but is now confronted by God himself' (*The Existence of God*, p. 34) may also have been adequately allayed by Bultmann himself three pages before and six pages after the sentence quoted by Gollwitzer. 'But faith speaks of God as other than the world. Faith knows that God becomes manifest only through his revelation and that in the light of that revelation everything which was previously called God is not God' (ibid., pp. 313f.). 'It therefore remains true that all human speaking of God apart from faith speaks not of God, but of the devil' (ibid., p. 322). Can one really say it more plainly? In face of the fear of which one constantly hears, that for Bultmann 'God's being is identical with the word-event in which it arises and is exhausted' (Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God*, p. 34), we may remind ourselves that Bultmann is one of the theologians who saw through and expressly repudiated natural theology as an undertaking whose aim was 'to eliminate God as the "Beyond" and "Otherworldly" in relation to man' (ibid., p. 314).

being. This would mean that God in his revelation *imparts* his concrete relational existence as Father, Son and Spirit by reiterating himself. As God's relation to us, reiteration is the correspondence to God's self-relatedness: *analogia relationis* [analogy of relation].[158] Understood in this way, revelation really is God's self-interpretation. And understood in this way, God in his revelation can *be* πρὸς ἕτερον without being dependent upon this ἕτερον. Conversely, humanity and its world owe their being to God's being πρὸς ἕτερον. In the irreversibility of this ontological relatedness of God and the world lies the ontological difference between God and the world. In this way, God can be the God of humanity without being defined as God by his relation to humanity. Yet at the same time, if the statement concerning the reiteration of God's being in the correspondence of the relations *ad extra* and *ad intra* is really true, then the statement 'God is in-and-for-himself' is *in concreto* [concretely] as false as the statement 'God is God only as the God of humanity'.[159]

[158] *CD* IV/1, pp. 186f.: 'As God was in Christ, far from being against Himself, or at disunity with Himself . . . He has . . . done and revealed that which corresponds to His divine nature.' 'Between the two, i.e. between the relationship in God Himself and God's relationship to the world, there is an obvious proportion' (*CD* III/1, p. 49). The analogy of relation is thus an *analogia proportionalitatis* [analogy of proportionality]. For my debate with the Catholic interpretation of this use of analogy in Barth, as in H. U. von Balthasar and G. Söhngen, see 'Die Möglichkeit theologischer Anthropologie auf dem Grunde der Analogie. Eine Untersuchung zum Analogieverständnis Karl Barths', in *Barth-Studien*, pp. 210–32.

[159] Gollwitzer certainly wanted to express this point by speaking of the necessity and unsuitability of is-statements with respect to the being of God. But the statement 'God is in and for himself' in unsuitable, not only with respect to all worldly being, but most particularly with respect to the being of God, as long as it is not thought out of the *analogia relationis*. But if it is thought out of the analogy of relations, it is an all the more unsuitable statement in which a negatively disguised soteriological interest lies hidden. This statement is not free from the suspicion that in it – quite contrary to Gollwitzer's intentions – the theology of consciousness has been turned on its head. One will therefore have to bring out Iwand's protest against the misuse of the *pro me* as a methodological principle in theology (cf. *Evangelische Theologie* 14 [1954], pp. 120ff.) with the same stringency and sharpness against the epistemological misuse of a 'God in himself' as methodological principle. That 'we do not have to reckon with any Son of God in Himself' (*CD* IV/1, p. 52) can only confirm the rejection of talk of 'God's being in and for himself'. Here we should remember Hermann Cremer's

What has been said may be summed up as follows:

1. What may be known and said about God's being may only be known and stated out of God's being for us.
2. The fact that what is to be known about God's being is made known to us from God's being, is grounded in the fact that God's being for us is event in Jesus Christ. This event is called revelation, and as such is God's self-interpretation.
3. God's being for us does not define God's being but, in his being for us, God does indeed interpret his being.
4. Interpretation lives from that which is to be interpreted. As relational being God's being for us is the reiteration

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circumspect attempt to consider in a theologically appropriate way God's essence and existence, God's revelation and his differentiation from us in his revelation: 'Therefore God's actions belong to his essence, and the determination of his actions by his essence yields his attributes in which the distinction between him and us, between him and those to whom he relates himself, permeates all the relations which are firmly established through the fact of this relation. The attributes of God are thus God's differentiation from us which manifests itself for us and to us in all relations, which this relation to us brings with it, the determination of his appearance in his actions through his essence. When, however, the actions and the essence of God so belong together that the former is the fullest manifestation of his essence, then the attributes are attributes of his essence, and we have neither cause nor any possibility to distinguish between attributes of "unrelatedness" and attributes of "relatedness", or between attributes of "self-relation" and attributes of "relation to the world", or between "ontological" and "economic", "transcendent" and "transitory" attributes. Each distinction of this kind – even of only a conceptual distinction – contains not merely no advancement or deepening of our knowledge of God, but works rather to the detriment of it, in that it then becomes almost impossible to hold fast to the fact that it is the essence – and, indeed, the whole essence – of God which in its revelation offers itself to us, and thereby opens itself to us. When God gives himself completely to us, and thereby becomes known by us, as he who is and will be completely for us, then there is nothing more beyond his revelation, even if eternity will not be long enough to exhaust everything that he is for us. But if in his actions he is everything which he actually is for us in his revelation, then he possesses no other attributes at all – neither ontological nor economic – than those which we perceive in his revelation, especially since his essence as love means that in every relation brought into being through his relation to us, and thus in every attribute, God manifests his whole essence, or, that in every attribute all other attributes are connoted' (*Die christliche Lehre von den Eigenschaften Gottes* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1917), pp. 19f.

of God's self-relatedness in his being as Father, as Son and as Holy Spirit.

5. In reiteration, that which is reiterated lets itself be known. In God's being for us, God's being for himself makes itself known to us as a being which grounds and makes possible God's being-for-us.
6. God's being corresponds to itself:
   (*a*) in the event of God's self-relatedness: as the relation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
   (*b*) in the event of revelation: as the relation of God's being for us to God's being in the event of his self-relatedness.

   The relation of correspondence (*b*) derives its ontological power from the relation of correspondence (*a*). The relation of correspondence (*a*) constitutes the relation of correspondence (*b*).
7. This constituting is itself to be thought of as the power which is proper to the relation of correspondence (*a*), in which the *hidden* God is the same God who *reveals* himself. As relational being, God's being hidden and God's being revealed is a being in the power of becoming.[160]

One final thought remains to be considered. In that we called God's being a being in becoming, we understood that God can reveal himself. But that God does what he can do, that in his revelation he has reiterated himself, is based on no necessity.

[160] If becoming is conceived as the ontological location of the being of God, this excludes the misunderstanding that, in becoming, God would become another. 'The one thing that God cannot do is cease to be God' (*CD* IV/1, p. 40). I would not be surprised if a reader not well-disposed to the foregoing necessarily subtle discussion began to lament a way of speaking scarcely intelligible to 'poor theological consumers used to something more normal' (as does, for example, W. Müller in a review of my book *Paulus und Jesus* in *Wort und Tat* 18 [1964] – a review of notable brevity). Over against this, it is to be said that I regret my inability to formulate with even greater subtlety the problem under discussion. And so I gladly join such critics in the confession of the shorter form of the *Shemoneh esreh* (common in the school of R. Meir): 'the needs of thy people are great and their knowledge (understanding) is small'.

Much more is it a matter of grace. Yet this grace is not alien to God's being. Otherwise how would it be distinguished from necessity? God's grace is rather the reiteration in relation to something other of the *Yes* to himself which constitutes God's being. In so far as this *Yes* in relation to something other than God calls this 'something other' into being, God's gracious *Yes* sets his being in relation to nothingness. But in so far as this *Yes* of grace frees the creation which has been called into being from the threat which comes through nothingness, God's gracious *Yes* exposes his being to that nothingness. In the end, therefore, God's grace means God's self-abandonment. But if God's self-abandonment is not also God giving himself up, then God's self-relatedness sought to prove itself precisely in God's relation to the nothing.

God's self-relatedness thus springs from the becoming in which God's being is. The becoming in which God's being is is a becoming out of the word in which God says *Yes* to himself. But to God's affirmation of himself there corresponds the affirmation of the creature through God. In the affirmation of his creature, as it becomes event in the incarnation of God, God reiterates his self-relatedness in relation to the creature, as revealer, revelation and as revealedness. This christological relation to the creature is also a becoming in which God's being is. But in that God in Jesus Christ *became* man, he is as creature exposed to perishing. Is God's being in becoming, here, a being unto death?

The New Testament witness answers this question with the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This message witnesses that where God's being in becoming was swallowed up in perishing, perishing was itself swallowed up in the becoming. In this it was established that God's being *remains* a being in becoming. In the event of the death of Jesus Christ God remains true to himself as the triune God in his *Yes* to humanity. In the death of Jesus Christ God's *Yes*, which constitutes all being, exposed itself to the *No* of nothingness. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ this *Yes* prevailed over the 'No' of nothingness. And in just this victory it was established

through grace why there is something at all, and not rather nothing. For:

> Were he not raised,
> Then the world would have perished;
> But since he is raised
> Then let us praise the Father of Jesus Christ.
> Kyrie eleison![161]

[161] In such praise of God, faith confesses that while 'man may deny God, according to the Word of reconciliation God does not deny man' (*CD* IV/3, p. 119). *Thus* one will be allowed to say and have to say that there is – thank *God* – no being of God in and for himself without humanity. Only where that is perceived is theology on its way to fulfilling its allotted task, so pertinently and so well-formulated by Gollwitzer: 'to bring the word "God" out of its many meanings and to make its true meaning plain' (H. Gollwitzer, *Gottes Offenbarung und unsere Vorstellung von Gott* [Munich: Kaiser, 1964], p. 8).

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EPILOGUE 1975

Since the first edition of this book the theological situation has changed significantly. Particularly in the field of what we call systematic theology, the present time is dominated by approaches which have almost completely 'emancipated' themselves from the endeavour to work out an appropriate relationship between exegesis and dogmatics – and that under the influence of oft-invoked interdisciplinary research! Everything is permitted. And since the fact that everything is permitted still seems to make use of the one who permits everything – how times change! – even more than everything is permitted. Whether theology also may profit from this remains to be seen.

Over against the current casual attitude towards its exegetical basis which systematic theology commonly believes that it can get away with, my paraphrase of Barth's understanding of God was guided by the premise that dogmatics is thoroughgoing exegesis. I have read Barth's *Church Dogmatics* on this basis, and would like my own explanations of it to be viewed in the same way. The fact that the exegetical connection was only implicitly demonstrated in this paraphrase does not contradict this. On the contrary, it was precisely in this way that the dogmatic train of thought had to stand by that claim.

My presupposition that dogmatics is thoroughgoing exegesis means that I face a cluster of objections, directed above all against the title of this paraphrase. Despite the warnings expressed in the preface to the first edition and on pages 114–16, the ontological localisation of God's being in becoming has been misunderstood to refer not 'to the fundamental and

categorial meaning of the Old Testament' but to 'the categories of Hegel's philosophy of history'.[1] Instead of 'becoming', so runs the objection, we should speak of the 'coming' of God.[2] At the very least, according to a similar objection, one ought to overhear a 'left-hegelian tone'[3] – though one listens in vain for this in my paraphrase. And so it may be that my 'demonstrations of Karl Barth's responsible speech about the being of God in becoming . . . are to be made concrete in Barth's expectation that "God's" being is in revolution'[4], and 'at least one would have to answer the question why Barth himself in fact avoided and evidently wanted to avoid Jüngel's ontological localisation of God's being'.[5]

I

All these objections are a matter of decided misunderstandings, for the first and last of which I myself am to blame. In the preface to the first edition of this book, I wrote: 'Barth himself . . . does not talk explicitly in the same way as the title of this book. That makes it easy for the critics.' Evidently I have made it even easier for them with this hint. And so let me expressly take back what I asserted at that time. More than once – how could I fail to mention it! – Barth does speak of 'becoming' in a sense which gives very clear warrant to the intention of the phrase 'God's being is in becoming'. I content myself with referring to *Church Dogmatics* I/1: 'What is real in God must

[1] H.-J. Kraus, *Reich Gottes: Reich der Freiheit. Grundriß systematischer Theologie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1975), p. 102; cf. p. 180.

[2] H.-J. Kraus, p. 102: '*God's being shares itself in the history of his coming.*' *A propos* the 'fundamental and categorical meaning of the Old Testament': Martin Buber, who cannot be suspected of deficiency in this regard, nevertheless ventures to write: 'How murky and presumptuous is the chatter of "the God who becomes" – but the becoming of the living God we know unswervingly in our hearts', M. Buber, *I and Thou* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1970), p. 130 [ET altered: tr.].

[3] F.-W. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus: Das Beispiel Karl Barths* (Munich: Kaiser, 1972), p. 232.

[4] Ibid., p. 190.

[5] Ibid., p. 232.

constantly become real precisely because it is real in God (not after the manner of created being). But this becoming (because it is this becoming) rules out every need of being for completion. Indeed, this becoming simply confirms the perfection of this being.'[6] Therefore it is not the case that Barth 'in fact avoided and evidently wanted to avoid' the ontological localisation of God's being in becoming. Nor, moreover, do we want to repeat the charge that Barth neglects the Old Testament, although he certainly uses a category which arouses the suspicion that he has fallen back into Hegel's philosophy of history. What Barth considered right with regard to the concept of being also holds true with regard to the expression 'becoming', namely, that 'we must not yield to a revulsion against the idea of being as such', but rather take it up 'with complete impartiality'.[7] Impartiality, after all, is not the same thing as imprecision.

At the level of method we must certainly distinguish between, on the one hand, the question whether this paraphrase – whose title, by the way, became rather strangely a matter for complaint without any reference to what was actually said in the book – depicts Barth's thought appropriately and, on the other hand, the question of the extent to which it expresses my own dogmatic viewpoint. Since it has been repeatedly thought right to relate me to Hegel's philosophy of history on the basis of this book, I may be allowed to make three remarks on this point.

First, I cannot see that proving that I have learned from Hegel ought to be a matter for censure. All further qualifications aside, Hegel drew attention to the centre of the Christian faith as it is understood in the reformation tradition much more effectively than many of his theological contemporaries and very many of our own. As long as theology lets itself be ashamed of the decisiveness with which Hegel dared to think and bring to speech Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity, in my judgment the admitted necessity of challenging the speculative claim

[6] *CD* I/1, p. 427.
[7] *CD* II/1, p. 260.

to lift theology from the medium of representation to the dignity of concepts is of secondary importance to the (again, admittedly necessary) differentiation of theology from the philosophy of history.[8] Here theology is face to face with the danger of – in Martin Kähler's words – 'confusing the self-deceptive certainty of speculation with communion with God', and, conversely, of confusing 'sceptical and critical self-limitation in the theory of knowledge with modesty before the mysteries of revelation'.[9] I will be content only if contemporary philosophers of history are treated by my critics as critically as I treat Hegel.

Second, the distinction between the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob on the one hand and the God of the philosophers on the other hand, long since reduced to a formula to soften our awareness of the problem, is something which I can only accept as partially meaningful. It is certainly meaningful in the context of Pascal's 'Memorial' (found sewn into his jacket after his death), that is, in the context of the assertion that one can be certain of God only as the God of Jesus Christ and that this God lets himself be found only with the help of the gospel: '"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob" not of the philosophers and the scholars. Certainty. Certainty . . . God of Jesus Christ . . . He can only be found by the ways taught in the Gospel.'[10] The distinction is therefore meaningful only as a rehearsal of the theologically fundamental state of affairs succinctly stated by Pascal: 'God speaks rightly of God.'[11] Finally, the distinction remains meaningful as we are unable to perceive God from first principles, since such principles – limited in all kinds of ways – have not as it were too little evidence but, rather,

[8] On this, see the impressive interpretation of M. Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist als theologisch-politischer Traktat* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970). Beyond this, see H. Küng, *The Incarnation of God: an introduction to Hegel's theological thought as prolegomena to a future Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), and W. Pannenberg, 'The Significance of Christianity in the Philosophy of Hegel', in *The Idea of God and Human Freedom* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), pp. 144–77.

[9] M. Kähler, *Die Wissenschaft der christlichen Lehre von dem evangelischen Grundartikel aus im Abrisse dargestellt* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1905), p. 150.

[10] 'Le Mémorial', in B. Pascal, *Pensées* (Paris: Hachette, 1955), p. 71.

[11] *Pensées* 799, p. 296.

too much.[12] But for that very reason, however, it will be good to *think* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in such a way that, even though he is not demonstrable *more geometrico* [by the geometrical method], nevertheless he is credible as a God *thinkable* for philosophers. It is not self-evident that one must cease to be a philosopher if one believes in the God who comes to speech in the gospel alone.

Third, it remains to note that for my part I not only willingly acknowledge the force of the category of 'coming' (incidentally, by no means only an Old Testament category) for a more precise ontological characterisation of the being of God, but also make extensive use of it. One could have already gathered that from the second introduction to this book, in which the statement 'God's being proceeds' was described as 'precisely the hermeneutical problem'. Beyond that, it may perhaps pacify the aforementioned critics – or maybe upset them all the more: Who knows? – if I simply point out to them that for twelve years I have been lecturing on the doctrine of God under the title 'God's being is in coming' . . .

II

Around the problem raised by the title of this essay a further misunderstanding proliferates – virtually an arch-misunderstanding which burdens not only the interpretation of Barth but theological discussion as a whole. I would be only too glad to clear it up once and for all, but in view of the fact that previous attempts have enjoyed only modest success, I have little hope of doing so. It concerns the ontological implications of theology. More specifically, it concerns the remarkable fact that positive use of the little word 'ontological' in the circle of so-called Barthians nowadays triggers complete phobia. The fact that Barth himself made uninhibited use of this word clearly does not prevent critics sensing in any interpretation which seeks to bring out the ontological relevance of Barth's theology an

[12] Cf. *Pensées* 72, p. 90.

attempt to subject it to the yoke of an ontology acquired in independence from theological knowledge.[13] It is of no help in this matter to assert that one's intention is the opposite of this, nor to offer the most careful and precise definition of the distinction between theology and ontology. Simply read the following series of statements which can hardly be exceeded in their argumentative force: 'Jüngel rightly remarks: "Barth's dogmatics makes ontological statements all along the line. But this dogmatics is not an ontology" – and therefore it is not yet settled whether Jüngel's attempt ontologically to localise Barth's talk about God's being really follows Barth's intention.'[14] I call this striking the enemy with his own weapon – indeed, with his own shield!

Theological anxiety about the use of the word 'ontological' needs more exact analysis, which cannot be undertaken here.[15] But this is the place to protest against the way in which mere denunciation of a concept replaces argument. Besides, it ought not to be too difficult to bring out the pre-theological ontological premises of a way of thinking that establishes an 'understanding of being' with the 'postulate of a social concept of God's reality' from which there 'emerges' the expectation 'that "God's" being is in revolution'.[16] The ontological pre-judgments which determine *this* thinking are indeed postulates acquired in an untheological way, which force theology whether it likes it or not into a yoke, in comparison with which the dictates of classical metaphysics are relatively harmless. For over against the merely intellectual impulse of classical metaphysics, the 'postulate of a social concept of the reality of God' leads to an intellectual impulse which erupts in a compulsion to act which can then no longer be overcome by argument.

[13] On this, see now the level-headed book of W. Härle, *Sein und Gnade. Die Ontologie in Karl Barths Kirchlicher Dogmatik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975).

[14] F.-W. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, p. 232.

[15] M. Kähler, *Die Wissenschaft der christliche Lehre*, p. 147, laments the fact that in the history of theology 'the ontological point of view' moved 'the boundaries of religious knowledge'. And he was right to lament it.

[16] F.-W. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, p. 190.

We ought not to understand the rejection of *such* an ontology in the wrong way. It ought to be undisputed that, like any understanding of reality, any idea of God also has (usually undisclosed) social commitments, and that a 'merely intellectual impulse' is itself hardly lacking in consequences for action. We can therefore only welcome the hermeneutical process in which theology reflects on its own social implications and draws attention to this or that political activity or inactivity which may possibly correspond to it.[17] For each effort of understanding has its pre-understanding which is not only to be explained on the basis of previous efforts at understanding. Formulated in a rather old-fashioned and undifferentiated way: being determines consciousness. And being includes social reality (although for its part social reality is already full of objectified, or, if one wishes, former consciousness), and includes the whole field of free and unfree, willed and coerced acts and their conditions. Even judged from this point, 'pitting action against being . . . , praxis against ontology' does not go far enough.[18] Equally, *fides quaerens intellectum* [faith seeking understanding] is similar to all understanding in that the *fides* corresponding to *intelligere* is embedded in historical and social relations, which exercise greater dominance over the endeavour to understand the less they are recognised and admitted. It is only appropriate therefore, that theology, too – as a very particular endeavour to understand – should not fail to ponder 'the political conditions of its possibility'. Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt's interpretation of Barth is worthy of recognition for intending to do this, and disappointment over the way it carries out this intention should not detract from this. The demand for a so-called 'social form of reflection' on theological concepts is plausible and, after all, not particularly new.

However, theology will have to reflect again *theologically* on the 'social form of reflection' of its concepts, and to carry this

[17] Already the assertion that these and only these practical ways of conduct *necessarily* correspond to a particular concept of God appears to me to be very overdrawn.

[18] F.-W. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus*, p. 36.

through into the process of the formation of genuinely theological theory, precisely in order to evaluate socially determined pre-understanding against that which is to be understood. And it must do this, not to hinder 'praxis' in some way, but in order to produce a theory as the normative ground for praxis, concerned only with what Graf Yorck calls its own 'capacity to become practical'. Part of this theory will be a theological ethics which, as an account of Christian freedom, will have one of its major practical criteria in the fact that, over against the intellectual impulse which erupts in the compulsion to act, it liberates the courage to serve its own understanding in thought and action. Not only dogmatic theory but also experience teaches us that this is possible only on the basis of an understanding of God which resists uncompromisingly the postulate of a 'social ideal of the reality of God', a postulate which erupts in the compulsion to act, and so also – but by no means only! – remains or becomes *self-critical* about its social implications. The Reformation, on the one hand, and the Enlightenment, on the other, set an end to the pure intellectual impulse of ancient metaphysics, though one very far from completion. At the very least, it is essential to begin the task of making a rational end, through enlightenment with the light of the gospel, of the intellectual impulse which erupts in the compulsion to act, as found in the new political metaphysics. Remembering Barth's theology might be an excellent contribution to this task.

III

The real point of conflict in the present dispute about how Barth's theology is rightly to be understood is therefore not between, on the one hand, an interpretation focused on the 'political Barth' and, on the other hand, an interpretation intent on an 'a-political Barth'. Barth or no Barth, theology may be well advised not to let itself be forced into the alternative of either dogmatic or social responsibility.

In the light of Barth's *Church Dogmatics,* I would like here at least to indicate the central point at which the – let us pluck up the courage, despite everything, to call it – ontological (but by no means therefore a-political) interpretative interest and the sharply anti-ontological political interpretative interest meet, unwillingly but not fortuitously. This might also be the point at which the socialist interpretation, and the interpretation of this dogmatics which is interested in the conclusion of modern consciousness of autonomy, also meet, again unwillingly but not fortuitously. In reaching the point at which theological enterprises of such divergent orientations meet, I would like to issue an emphatic warning – particularly to our fundamentalists – against passing over any nuances or accusing Barth's dogmatics of being the beginning and cause of all the supposed theological evils of our day. If it is correct that these kinds of divergent theological trends encounter each other here (at a point which remains to be described more closely), it is by and large because here we are concerned with the dispute about the very subject-matter of theology. And it could well be that, if we refuse from the outset to get involved in this encounter, we will fail to catch sight of some of the most enduring, interesting and fruitful problems in theology.

These lines of Barth interpretation, which at the same time represent different lines of approach in contemporary theology, meet at the point of the mystery of the *universality* of the Christian faith. All serious engagement with Barth's work is concerned with this problem, for dogmatic attempts to think correctly about the mystery of the universality of God form a central theme in this work itself. I do not think it likely that Barth's own interest in this problem is to be understood biographically as the transformation of an originally socio-political – more precisely, socialist – engagement in theology. But even if it were, that would not absolve us from the task of taking with dogmatic seriousness the careful and deliberate transformation of a socio-political praxis into a dogmatic theory. It is therefore appropriate to define the pivotal matter *dogmatically.*

That the universality of God is a *mystery* is something which can only be comprehended christologically. It is rather trivial to think of God as the all-determining reality, and therefore to predicate universality of God, independent of the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the man Jesus which surpasses every particularity. But the fact that the history of this man must be understood as God's own history is a mystery. The mystery, however, can for its part only be understood if we affirm that this history – and that means, if we affirm that God, *in so far* as he is called Jesus Christ – is universal. Of this Christian theology was always aware. And in the course of its history it has also produced many other ways of beginning to answer the question of how we may think responsibly about the universal claim of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ – notably in relation to the doxologies of the church.

Barth gave an especial sharpness to his own attempts to bring out the dogmatic significance of the universal claim of the being of Jesus Christ, in that he did not wish to limit the inclusive significance of God's revelation to the church, and therefore to proclamation, baptism and the Lord's Supper. This forms an important part of the background to his dispute with the tradition over the problem of election. But already in the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* we can find considerations such as 'God may speak to us through Russian Communism, a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub, or a dead dog'.[19] Over against the idea that the task of theology is 'to pass on what we have heard as independent proclamation', the freedom of God is given considerable emphasis: 'God may speak to us through a heathen or an atheist, and thus give us to understand that the boundary between the Church and the secular world can still take at any time a different course from that which we think we discern.'[20] It is certainly true that here this possibility is not yet

[19] *CD* I/1, p. 55.

[20] Ibid. Barth continues: 'Yet this does not mean . . . that we ourselves have to proclaim the pagan or atheistic thing which we have heard' (ibid.). We would do well to devote theological attention to this continuation.

explicitly christologically grounded. But the reference to the boundaries of the *church* nevertheless point in this direction. If 'the possibility has to be taken into account that God may also speak from outside the Church as we now know it or as it really is', and if therefore 'the attention of dogmatics must not let itself be limited by the walls of the Church',[21] then such a possibility – if it is not to be mere caprice – must be grounded in the being of Jesus Christ which constitutes the being of the church.

In explaining Barth's remarks, we should not refer too hastily to his reception of the *extra Calvinisticum*. After all, even the emotion with which the Reformed emphasise the independence of the divine Spirit and the divine Word is only properly understood when it is heard and grasped in connection with the emphatic talk of God's self-relation which is found throughout the entire *Church Dogmatics*. The more Barth pondered that independence, the more firmly he considered it a way of specifying more closely the character of God's self-relation, thereby seeking to exclude on persuasive grounds the suspicion that God's freedom might be caprice. The Christology of the doctrine of reconciliation is shaped throughout by this intention. In this connection, particular importance is to be attached to the sections at the end of the christological paragraphs of the doctrine of reconciliation which move from the christological to the anthropological realm, and which Barth called 'transitional discussions'.[22] These discussions are concerned with what Barth explicitly called an '*ontological* connection between the man Jesus on one side and all other men on the other'.[23] What is here considered to be an 'ontological connection' is understood emphatically as constituted through highly particular events, described by Barth with the headings of the closing sections of the relevant

[21] Ibid., p. 81.

[22] *CD* IV/1, p. 284; *CD* IV/2, p. 265; *CD* IV/3, p. 275.

[23] *CD* IV/2, p. 275. The little word 'ontological' is used emphatically by Barth and has, accordingly, been italicised.

christological paragraphs as 'The verdict of the Father', 'The direction of the Son' and 'The promise of the Spirit'. It is therefore a matter of ontological language which is grounded exclusively in theological and – as with the *Church Dogmatics* as a whole – ultimately trinitarian considerations.[24] Only in this way is it a meaningful claim that 'this ontological connection is the legal basis of the *kerygma*'.[25]

However, if the ontological connection between the man Jesus and all others is the legal basis of the kerygma, then the church, proclamation, baptism and the Lord's Supper are grounded in such a way that they necessarily point beyond themselves. They do this in that they point in a definite and direct way to Jesus Christ, but not, so to speak, *back* to him but rather *forward* to him, thus pointing *into* the breadth of humanity beyond the walls of the church. In this, the Christian must always be ready to hear afresh the same voice of Jesus Christ. In this sense, in his doctrine of reconciliation Barth gave explicit christological and pneumatological grounding to the possibility (also found in the prolegomena, though still with a rather abstract appeal to the freedom of God), 'that God may also speak from outside the Church as we now know it or as it really is'.

[24] Why Jürgen Moltmann thinks that he has to recommend to Barth, and then also to H.-G. Geyer and me, that we set aside 'a simple concept of God' and instead speak of 'trinitarian differentiation' (*The Crucified God*, p. 203) is one of the riddles of contemporary theology whose solution seems to require a particular simple-mindedness. I am simply baffled by Moltmann's position. In 1965, I already maintained in this book 'that precisely the event of Jesus' death on the cross, which calls the being of God into question, makes a trinitarian statement necessary'. Beside this, I may point to statements about *God's passion* in this book and elsewhere, statements which Moltmann has by no means ignored: cf. *Unterwegs zur Sache. Theologische Bemerkungen* (Munich: Kaiser, 1972), pp. 116f., 119f., 276f., 293, and also *Evangelische Kommentare* 2 (1969), pp. 199f., and *Evangelische Theologie* 31 (1971), p. 384. In making these formulations, I was led all along the way by the question of how the being of God is to be thought. And it is in just this respect that I can see no progress in what Moltmann *actually* says about Barth and other contemporaries on the doctrine of the Trinity. We have to insist that whatever is to make for progress in theology must be thought through. Otherwise, what is intended as progress in theology never gets beyond setting up statements than which nothing greater can be conceived, but into which no thinking can penetrate.

[25] *CD* IV/2, p. 275.

In his account of the prophetic office of Jesus Christ, Barth points to Jesus' resurrection from the dead as the ground for the fact that 'the sphere of His dominion and Word is in any case greater than [the prophets' and apostles'] prophecy and apostolate, and greater than that of the *kerygma*, dogma, cultus, mission and the whole life of the community'.[26] The *ontological* significance of the eschatological event of Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the determinative ground for faith's expectation that 'not merely in the witness of the Bible and the various arrangements, works and words of the Christian church, but also in the secular sphere', it encounters true words of God and therefore something like 'parables of the kingdom in the full biblical sense'.[27] Correspondingly, in looking at the calling of humanity – taking up the grain of truth in a much-criticised distinction in the older Protestant theology between *vocatio externa* [outward vocation] and *vocatio interna* [inward vocation] – Barth argues that 'the living Lord Jesus Christ who encounters and deals with man wholly from without is not bound to preaching and the sacraments in the work of His Holy Spirit seizing and altering man within, but may very well, *extra muros ecclesiae* . . . know and tread the very different ways of very different possibilities of most effective calling'.[28]

We must recognise that the crux of Barth's argument is the truth manifest in Jesus' resurrection – that there may be godless humanity, but there is no God without humanity.[29] It is this truth which prevents us from maintaining an abstract opposition of the secular and Christian realms. '[I]n the world reconciled by God in Jesus Christ, there is no secular sphere abandoned by Him or withdrawn from His control.'[30] In this theological view of Barth's, one can recognise *his* – certainly very dialectical – employment of the modern consciousness of freedom and

[26] *CD* IV/3, p. 116.
[27] Ibid., p. 117.
[28] Ibid., p. 516.
[29] Cf. ibid., p. 119.
[30] Ibid.

autonomy.[31] One can also read Barth's remarks – albeit on very different grounds – as a Protestant counterpart to Karl Rahner's doctrine of the anonymous Christian.[32] Finally, in Barth's doctrine of the ontological relevance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ one can discern the theological justification for the kind of ecumenical praxis which in Geneva nowadays is demanded and defended as orthopraxis. As with all really relevant knowledge, the possibilities of meaningful use and catastrophic abuse lie very close to one another, though in no way do they recommend themselves in equal measure.

As a criterion for right use and appropriate interpretation of this central point in Barth's work, we may well consider the question of how the secular world, by no means abandoned to itself, is to be understood and treated theologically: In such a way that Jesus Christ functions as one of its predicates, or in such a way that, as the one who comes *to* the world, he remains *in* the world as one who is coming in his own sovereignty? In the second case, his coming remains an 'interruption of the secularism of life in the world', which brings the world to its truth for the first time.[33] In this case, prior to being conceived as the correspondence of mind and reality, truth would be understood christologically as the event of a *saving interruption* of the actual connectedness of life, in virtue of which we are first able to grasp that the world *holds together* at the deepest level, though not through itself. In this, I see one of the most important contributions of Christian theology to the question

[31] In his essay 'Radikale Autonomie Gottes. Zum Verständnis der Theologie Karl Barths und ihrer Folgen', in *Theorie des Christentums. Historisch-theologische Studien zu seiner neuzeitlichen Verfassung* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1972), pp. 161–81, T. Rendtorff has undertaken – as it were in accordance with the principle that like is never discerned through like – what is to date the most interesting and informative attempt to conceive of Barth's life work as a theological working through of modern autonomy, and so as an 'expression of the present status of the history of Christianity under the conditions of modernity' (p. 180).

[32] Cf. my essay '*Extra Christum nulla salus* – a principle of natural theology? Protestant reflections on the "anonymity" of the Christian', in *Theological Essays* I (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), pp. 173–88.

[33] *CD* IV/3, p. 117.

of ontology: God is at one and the same time the interruption of the coherence of being and its intensification; and, therefore, the correspondence between person (mind) and reality, which occurs in all true knowledge, means, in the case of knowledge *of God,* a gain to being which at the level of practice makes *more possible* in the actuality of the world than that actuality is capable of granting to itself. If God's being is in becoming, then for us, too, more is possible.

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